

AN
ESSAY
ON
WOMAN

Fezzio y Monterepo (B. G.)
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AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
LEARNING, GENIUS,
AND ABILITIES,
OF THE
F A I R - S E X:
PROVING THEM
NOT INFERIOR TO MAN,
FROM A VARIETY OF EXAMPLES,
EXTRACTED FROM
ANCIENT AND MODERN HISTORY.
TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH OF
EL THEATRO CRITICO.

L O N D O N :

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PRICE THREE SHILLINGS.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH OF
EL THEATRO CRITICO.

LONDON:
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the lower end of the Strand, in the Theatre.
WILLIAM DODDING.
PRICE THREE SHILLINGS.

DEDICATION.

*To Mrs. C***** of Somerset-
shire.*

M A D A M,

AS on my reading the original of the following piece, you laid your commands on me to translate it for the farther justification of the female sex, I conceived no name so proper

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per

per as your's to usher it into the world, but you, with that reserve which, I must say, influences the whole tenor of your conduct, would only allow of putting the initial letter: the whole at full length, would, with submission, have served the cause better, as jointly with Mrs. Rowe, and the Misses Miniffe, forming, if I may be allowed the expression, a publicly known Somersetshire quadrumvirate, of females eminent for intellects; not to mention the superior qualities of the heart, these being not so much the point in dispute. I say publicly known, as otherwise, we can both depose

depose that our county, which we by no means pretend to exalt above the other parts of Britain, affords, amidst the shades of privacy, many females, whose talents and accomplishments might confound all the rude obloquy thrown out against your amiable sex; characters so sublime, so endearing, so complete in every relation of life, as to answer the following commendation which Adam gives to Raphaël of his admired Eve.

So absolute she seems,
And in herself compleat, so well to know
Her own, that what she wills to do or say,
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;

Authority;

Authority and reason on her wait ;

And to consummate all,
Greatness of mind, and nobleness, their seat
Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
About her as a guard angelic plac'd.

I remember you was desirous of knowing something of the work, and author, but herein I can give you little satisfaction. Not a great man dies in France, Holland, Germany, and Italy, but we have some account of him in the periodical pieces ; whereas, concerning the state of literature in Spain, we seem kept in the dark. The sum of all I know is, that the work is called, *Theatro Critico Universal*; consists of several volumes
in

in large octavo, containing a vast variety of discourses intended to explode vulgar errors. The author was Benedict Feijoo who, embracing the Monastic state, became General of the Order of St. Benedict, a dignity of great consideration, besides which; his immense erudition, being joined with wit and an excellent talent at composition, advanced him to other honours both academical and ecclesiastic. In Spain, Madam, a work passes through several examinations before admitted to the press, as a fence against heterodoxy, and one of the examiners (who are always

men of distinguished characters, in his report, gives the following portraiture of our author, which, to you, I need not disfigure by a translation: *Quod enim genus disciplinæ est, in quo versatus non sit, atque ita eximie versatus, quod in eo solo elaborasse? esic nimirum omnia complexus, ut ne unus quidum quisquam singula: rursus ita ad summum, quasi nihil aliud præteræ didicisset.* The good Benedictine ever exerted his talents to a worthy end, becoming an honest member of society; accordingly, his candour and courage in the cause of truth, prompted him to expose some vulgar errors which the usages of
the

the Roman church had sanctified, but which he accounted hurtful to essential religion; and for this temerity the inquisition laid their hands on him. Such, however, is the regard paid to singular virtue and literature, meeting in one person, that the throne itself is said to have interposed in Father Fejoo's favour, and he was set at liberty. This is a circumstance which I know will recommend him to your favour, and to that of most of your sex, whom I have observed zealously to countenance courage and frankness, despising all duplicity and dissimulation, as the sure marks of an abject spirit;

and these dispositions in you are powerful incentives to a suitable; behaviour in us. The manners of women, I am in earnest, turn the scale of the public manners. Without flattery, I look upon the declared patronage of the fair sex, to be no slender bulwark to political liberty; and may they ever, persevere in such generous sentiments !

I am afraid I have drawn up a tedious dedication to you ; but I conclude with an humble, though not unreasonable request. It is, that as in compliance with your desire, I have appeared in print,
which

which to one so fond of the *fallentis semita vitæ*, costs not a little, should I thereby incur the public derision, I may find an asylum in the continuance, or rather increase of your esteem and favour which will blunt the edge of all other vexations.

I am,

MADAM

Your most humble Servant

The Translator.

The

The Reader is desired kindly to excuse the following ERRATA:

- Page 39. l. 18. r. stimulations.
44. l. 7. r. Barclay's suffrage.
51. l. 6. r. Brunchaut.
58. l. 8. r. parrots.
59. l. 16. r. tranquillity.
64. l. 1. r. Manlius.
65. l. 2. r. Gaul.
66. l. 10. r. deliverance. Behold a
89. l. 3. r. I.
102. l. 6. r. pronounce the
l. 8. r. vouchsafe.
139. l. 2. r. debility.
160. l. 7. r. Artamenes or

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A D E F E N C E

TO THE LONDON SOCIETY OF LITERARY GENTLEMEN
 AND TO THE SOCIETY OF THE PRESS

We have seen, in our time, how
 French authors, who were once
 world have imagined, we have seen

DEFENCE OF WOMEN.

TO THE LONDON SOCIETY OF LITERARY GENTLEMEN
 AND TO THE SOCIETY OF THE PRESS

SECTION I.

THE task I now undertake is
 something arduous, and not
 without danger. It is not
 only against the ignorant vulgar that
 I enter the lists. To defend women
 in general is come to be the same
 thing as to affront, and consequently
 offend the generality of men, who

Author B

build the super-eminence of their sex on the contempt of the other.

We have seen, in our time, says a French author, what our fathers never would have imagined. We have seen Frenchmen take their pen in hand purely to propagate a contempt of women.

Among our ancestors, persons convicted of having spoken ill of women, were not allowed to come into the public assemblies, or to be present at tournaments, or if they took such liberties, were ignominiously turned out. And this was not merely from humanity or gallantry, but it was a point of policy. They were persuaded that the more women see themselves respected,

respected, the more they endeavour to deserve respect; that however a governor may cultivate our understanding, our temper receives its cast from women, at that age, when soft propensities prompt us to offer them the first fruits of our heart; that many a one, distinguished for the exertion of noble sentiments, would possibly have had only a vulgar soul, had not the desire of pleasing them awakened his self-love. Theodoret believed Adam to have been naturally of a savage disposition, but civilized by the amiable deportment and soothing blandishments of his helpmate. *Evam liberasse a belluina feritate virum suum Adam*: i. e. Eve reclaimed her husband Adam from his brutal ferocity.

In the moral part of their composition, say those unnatural railers, women are all vice, and their physical part is full of imperfections. The very name of woman is an abomination among the Tartars, never to be written or uttered: instead of maiden or woman, they say, *a veiled, mother of a family*. The history of Tamerlan tells us, that meeting with the word woman in a letter to him from Bajazet, that martial prince cried out with indignation: *This mad fellow of a turk! to mention such a polluted name in a letter to me!* But it is at their shallow intellects and the contracted knowledge of women, that such ill-mannered malice chiefly points its batteries; and I, to overthrow them, shall, after a cursory vindication

tion of the sex in other articles, discourse more fully on their capacity for every science, and the most sublime parts of knowledge, adducing authentic examples in support of my assertions.

Mahomet, the false prophet, has excluded women from that chimerical paradise, which his debauched imagination has planted for his followers*,

B. 3

and

The learned author, it seems, had imbibed the common mistake for such, the writer of the following passage affirms it to be; and one better acquainted with the Turkish principles and manners it will be difficult to find.—“ I assure you it is certainly false; though commonly believed in our parts of the world, that Mahomet excludes women from any share in a future happy state. He was too much
a gen-

and makes all their felicity to consist in beholding, from without, the men wallowing in luxury and magnificence within. Married women, to be sure, must

“ a gentleman, and loved the fair sex too well,
 “ to use them so barbarously. On the con-
 “ trary, he promises a very fine paradise to the
 “ Turkish women. He says, indeed, that this
 “ paradise will be a separate place from that
 “ of their husbands; but I fancy the most part
 “ of them will not like it the worse for that;
 “ and that the regret of this separation will
 “ not render their paradise the less agreeable.
 “ It remains to tell you, that the virtues which
 “ Mahomet requires of the women, to merit
 “ the enjoyment of future happiness, are not
 “ to live in such a manner as to become use-
 “ less to the world, but to employ themselves
 “ as much as possible, in making little mus-
 “ sulmans. The virgins, who die virgins, and
 “ the widows who marry not again, dying in
 “ mortal sin, are excluded out of paradise: For
 “ woman, says he, not being capable to ma-
 “ nage

must account it no small part of that
blissful state of voluptuousness, to see
their husbands in the arms of other

B 4 women,

“ nage the affairs of state, nor to support the
“ fatigues of war, God has not ordered them
“ to govern or reform the world; but he has
“ entrusted them with an office which is not
“ less honourable; even that of multiply-
“ ing the human race: and such as, out of
“ malice or laziness, do not make it their bu-
“ siness to bear or to breed children, fulfil not
“ the duty of their vocation, and rebel against
“ the commands of God. Here are maxims
“ for you, prodigiously contrary to those of
“ your convents. What will become of your
“ saint Catharines, your saint Therefas, your
“ saint Claras, and the whole bead-roll of your
“ holy virgins and widows? who, if they are to
“ be judged by this system of virtue, will be
“ found to have been infamous creatures, that
“ passed their lives in most abominable liber-
“ tinism.” Lady M.W.M’s Letters. Vol. III.

women, whom that visionary has feigned to be formed anew for those gratifications. That such a chimera could ever gain credit in a great part of the world, is one of the most palpable tokens of man's weakness and depravity.

But to exclude women from happiness in the other world, or deny them the least spark of merit in this, seems nearly tantamount; yet how do the very dregs of the people, men of the most abandoned morals, speak of the sex as a common sewer of vice, folly, and ignorance. They, indeed, find their contumelious railings supported by sarcasms and invectives in books. A primitive father defines woman *an animal that delights in finery*. There
was

was a celebrated epigram among the Greeks, on Jupiter's being one day provoked by Juno's freaks, that driving her out of the empyreum, he kept her suspended in the air for some time; and that in the interim of this chastisement, the presumptuous Ixion embraced, instead of the goddess, that cloud, which produced the first Centaurs. The sage rabbis keep up a tradition not very far from that fable, concerning the first and most consequential of all marriages. They relate that Adam, his lovely Eve's temper not corresponding with her form, repudiated her for the space of a hundred and thirty years, but not being able to bear life without the pleasurable commerce of women, he had one Maama and three other beautiful concubines,

concubines, and that his issue by them were called dæmons.

Many will scarce allow that the sex affords one single good woman ; and in those whose outward deportment speaks a constellation of virtues within, it is construed design and hypocrisy ; and a modest countenance reviled as the indication of a libidinous mind :

*Aspera si visa est, rigidasque imitata
Sabinas,
Velle, sed ex alto dissimulare puta.*

She may seem a prude, and affect the austerity of a Sabine dame, but it is all a mask.*

To

* Two smarter lines on this head, perhaps cannot be produced than these of Congreve.

Women are like tricks done by slight of hand,
Which to admire, you must not understand.

To such insolent calumny the most suitable return is contempt and indignation. It has been observed, that not a few of those, who on all occasions give no quarter to the sex, and paint them in the worst colours, are most earnest in soliciting their favours. Euripides, who so outrageously inveighs against women in his tragedies, was, according to Athæneus and Stobeus, extremely addicted to them in private. On the stage he raged against them, and idolized them in the chamber. Bocace, whose lasciviousness could scarce be exceeded, wrote a virulent satyr against women, with the title of LABERYNTO DEL AMOR: THE MAZE OF LOVE. What could be his meaning in this? Perhaps, he was for palming it on the world as his real sentiment,

sentiment, as a cloak to his turpitude. Perhaps, his brutish gratifications had created such a satiety and disgust, as made the whole sex appear to him all one loathsome heap of defects. It may likewise be from revenge, at having met with repulses; for such men have been known, who give a woman a bad character only because she would not stain her virtue by complying with their desires. Nay, this unjust resentment has vented itself in worse effects, a remarkable instance of which is, the catastrophe of Miss Douglas, an Irish lady of extraordinary beauty, when one Mr. William Leout, incensed at her rejecting his solicitations, accused her of high-treason; and being convicted on suborned evidence, she was put to death.

death. Leout himself afterwards confessed the whole guilt. This is related by La Mothe le Vayer. *Opuscula Scept.*

I am far from denying that great crimes have been committed by women; but were we to rake into the genealogy of their enormities, how many should we find originally proceeding from artful enticements and audacious pursuits of our sex. Let him who would have all women good; set about converting all men. Nature has implanted modesty in them, as a fence against all the batteries of appetite; and it is very seldom that the first breach in this fence is made from within the place. As for some passages in the scriptures, which seem to bear

bear hard against the women, they are undoubtedly to be understood only of the wicked and perverse, as unquestionably such there are. And if levelled at the whole sex in common, they afford no direct proof against them, for the physicians of souls cry out against women, as the physicians of bodies do against fruits; good, useful and beautiful in themselves, and noxious only by our frequent abuses. Besides, every body knows the latitude allowed an orator in setting forth a danger, when it is to avert the evil consequences. I call on those who pronounce women to be actually more vicious than our own sex, to reconcile such a charge with the church's giving them, in a particular manner, the epithet of *devout*. What can they
 answer,

answer to so many luminaries, no less eminent for parts than piety, who agree that more women will be saved than men, though the latter outnumber the former? Which they ground, as indeed it cannot be grounded on any thing else, on their having observed them to be more inclined to every work of piety. We must turn our backs on common sense, or own, with Plutarch, that they have the same virtues as we; and that the distinction of sex, not residing in the minds, theirs is as capable of learning and ratiocination as those of men. A thousand families verify what is observed in many plants and animals, that the female is preferable to the male. It is therefore a saying quite unworthy of Thucidides, *That a woman's greatest*

com-

commendation is, not to be spoken of, neither well nor ill. And Xenophon's opinion is not much better, that, for a marriage to be happy, the bride should have seen or heard very little before she comes over the bride-groom's threshold; that is, the less she knows of the world the better.

Here, methinks, adversaries rise up on all sides, and stun me with that common, but senseless clamour, that women are the cause of all evil; and in proof of it, the very populace are continually roaring out, *Caba ruined Spain**, and, *Eve the world*.

But
 * This lady, daughter to count Julian governor of Ceuta in Africa, was called Florinda Caba. Having been forced by Roderigo, king

But the former assertion is absolutely false. Count Julian was the person who drew over the Moors into Spain, without being in the least instigated to it by his daughter, who did only (and can she be blamed for that?) make known to her father the injury done to her. Unhappy sex indeed! if, on receiving the greatest injury, they must

C

not

king of Spain, acquainted her father with the outrage. He for some time concealed his resentment, till the Arabs having a powerful army in Africa, he made use of that pretence for requesting the king's leave to go to his government. Accordingly, having got together his most valuable effects, he went over to Centa with his spouse. Soon after pretending that she was given over by the physicians, he begged of the king to allow his daughter to come and pay her last respects to her mother. Julian now seeing his wife and family safe, communicated the ebullitions

not be allowed the slender comfort of disclosing their convulsed minds to a father or a spouse ! They only who can go about such a brutish attempt would wish them under such a restraint. Besides, if at any time the revenge has been excessive, it is not the weak suffering party who is to be blamed, but the executor of the vengeance,

ebullitions of his heart to Muza, the Arabian general, engaging to make him master of all Spain if he would supply him with forces. Muza immediately sent him 12,000 men, with which he landed and subdued part of Spain, and brought in the Arabs, who compleated the conquest. In commemoration of this fatal revenge, Florinda became a common name for bitches, but never used as a christian name ; and her father falling under a suspicion of holding intelligence with the Christians against the Arabs, was put to death in the year 717.

geance, and the author of the crime which gave occasion to it; so that the whole guilt lies among men.

The second instance no more proves women to be generally worse than men, than as it proves angels to be generally worse than women; for, as Adam was inticed to sin by a woman, so was woman inticed by an angel. Who sinned most, whether Adam or Eve, still remains a question, the fathers themselves being divided about it. Indeed, what Cayetan alledges in behalf of Eve, as imposed upon by a creature of much more exalted powers and faculties than herself, is a circumstance not applicable to Adam, and, which must be owned, no small extenuation of her guilt.

SECTION II.

TO proceed from the moral to the physical part, as more immediately relative to our present purpose, the preference of the robust sex to the delicate, sex is accounted, beyond all question, as self-evident. Great numbers make no scruple to call a woman an imperfect, and even monstrous animal ; and affirm, that nature, in generation, always intends a male, and that it is only from mistake or deficiency either of the matter or the faculty, that a woman is produced.

Excellent philosophers truly ! So nature intends its own destruction, as without the concurrence of both sexes, the species cannot be maintained ; and
human

human nature would, in this its capital operation, fail as often as it hits, the number of both sexes being in all countries very nearly equal.* And how can the formation of woman be attributed to a deficiency or defect in the matter and faculty they being generally issue of fathers, who, besides the vigour of age, are generally sanguine, vegete, and robust? Had man preserved his original innocence, as then there would have been none of these supposed deficiencies, would there likewise have been no women engendered, no propagation of the human species?

C 3 I know

• Most political arithmeticians, allow about 18 males, to 17 females, as a surplus to balance the expences of war, the sea, and other dangers which fall to man's lot.

I know that a certain writer, rather than lay aside his declared spleen against the other sex, has digested that absurdity, gross as it is. This was Almaricus, a doctor at Paris in the twelfth century, who, among other errors, advances, that had the state of innocence continued, every individual of our species would have come into existence a complete man; and that God would have created them by himself, as he created Adam.

This Almaric was such a blind implicit follower of Aristotle, that all, or the greater part of his errors, were consequences which he drew from the doctrines of that philosopher; for finding Aristotle intimating, and not only in one part of his works, that woman

is a defective animal, and the generation of her purely fortuitous and foreign from nature's intent, Almaricus infers, that there would have been no women in the state of innocence. Thus an error in physics is often productive of heresy in divinity.

But this submissive attachment of Almaricus to Aristotle proved an ugly affair to both: for Almaric's errors were condemned in a council at Paris, held in the year 1209; and the same council prohibited the reading of Aristotle's books, pope Gregory IX. ratifying the prohibition by bull. Almaric having been in his grave above a twelvemonth before his tenets underwent this public disgrace, his bones were dug up, and cast into a common

mon sewer, or some other place, little fit to be a receptacle for human remains.

We are not to be absolutely swayed by any doctor or doctors, however learned and knowing in other respects, who will assert the female sex to be deficient, many persons of sense having gone very deep into Almaric's opinion, without running into his error. Aristotle, cannot be doubted to have acted a very dishonourable part against woman, as not only expatiating with complacency on their physical defects, but with still greater acrimony inveighs against their morals, that one would be inclined to think him of a frigid complexion, and innate natural aversion from the sex; quite the reverse.

nom

He

He was not only a most fond and tender husband to both his wives (for it seems, he was twice married) but with the first, called Pythais, daughter, or according to others, niece of Hermias, tyrant of Aterneum; he was so enamoured, that he even offered incense to her as a deity. He is moreover, likewise taxed with a passion for a little servant girl, which carried him to very indecent excesses, though Plutarch will believe nothing of the matter; but here Theocritas of Chios, author of a keen epigram against Aristotle, for his inventive leachery, is rather to be believed, being cotemporary with Aristotle, whereas Plutarch, was much posterior to him; so that *prince of philosophers*, may stand for an instance, that, as we have said above, acrimony against women,

women, is often, and even generally accompanied with, if not proceeding from a licentious inclination to them.

From the same physical error of reviling woman, as an imperfect creature, sprung another theological error, combated by St. Austin, in his *City of God*, *Book XXII. Chap. XVII*, and of which, the Partisans, take upon them to say, that at the universal resurrection, this imperfect work, will be rendered perfect, by a change of sex; all the women, becoming men, grace being then to complete that work, which nature had left, only as it were, rough hewn.

This error, is a kin to that of the infatuated alchymists, who, from their maxim, that nature, in the production
of

of metals, always intending the generation of gold, it is only from a deficiency of the virtue, or faculty, that it falls short, and stops in some other metal, pretend that their science completes the operation, and transmutes into gold, what nature left iron. But after all, this error may be easily borne with, as not affecting any article of faith, and because, whatever becomes of nature's intention and the imaginary ability of science, gold is unquestionably the most noble metal, all other, being of a quality much inferior; but, with regard to our question, the assertion, that nature always intends the production of male, and, that in a female, its operation miscarries, is absolutely false, and, much more, that this assertion, will be rectified, at the universal resurrection.

SECTION

SECTION III.

Not that I approve the rant of Zacutus Lusitanus, who, in his introduction to the treatise *de Morbis Mulierum*, advances several far-fetch'd reasons for the physical superiority of women, when the argument might have been discussed with others much more specious. But it is only an equality, and not their superiority, which I have taken on myself to maintain.

And, to begin with the three qualities, in which men seem to have a declared advantage over women, *strength*, *fortitude*, and *prudence*, omitting for the present, the understanding, which shall be treated of seperately, and more in form. Were I to give up those qualities, still, an equivalent remains to women;

women; with those masculine endowments, they can contrast *beauty*, *gentleness*, and *candour*.

Strength, which is a quality of the body, may be considered, as counterbalanced by beauty, both being qualities of the body. Many will give the preference to the latter, and rightly, were the worth of qualities to be estimated, only by the pleasure of the eye. But, as far as public utility, is to be preferred to a sensitive gratification, so far I think, strength is to be valued above beauty. To the strength of man, the world owes many essential advantages, it is the basis of the three pillars of every state, war, agriculture, and mechanics. As to the beauty of women, I know of no real benefit

benefit or advantage accruing from it, unless by pure accident. Some, indeed, vilify it, as far from beneficial, being often the cause of guilt and wretchedness, kindling inordinate desires, exciting quarrels, and, bringing a load of cares, restrictions, and solitudes on those who have the keeping of it.

But, this accusation is groundless, and proceeds from want of reflection. For, were all women ill-favoured, those who had the fewest flaws would be as powerful attractives, as the most piquant beauties in our days, and, consequently, would do the like mischiefs.

The least ugly of all the Grecian dames would cause a second Troy to be laid in ashes, no less than the beautiful

beautiful Helena; and one with no pretensions to beauty would, in the palace of a Rodrigo, as effectually prove the overthrow of Spain as the charming La Caba. Inordinate passions rage no less in countries where the women have no great share of beauty, than in those where they are most celebrated for allurements; even in Moscovy, which, for beautiful women, exceeds all the other states of Europe, incontinency, does not run into those excesses so flagrant in other countries; and, for conjugal fidelity they are exemplary.

Beauty, therefore, is not in itself the cause of the many evils imputed to it; yet, in the present question, strength has my suffrage. I account it a quality much more valuable than beauty, and

and, though men, may highly value themselves in this respect, the women, are not without a reply; and for this they are furnished with an aphorism, received by many learned men, and, particularly, a whole celebrated school; which has decided the will to be a more noble faculty than the understanding. Now this favours the female cause, for, though strength, as more valuable, be preferred by the understanding, beauty, as more amiable, has a greater sway over the will.

To the quality of *fortitude* which dignifies men, may be opposed that *gentleness*, which so highly recommends woman. But here let it be noticed, that I am not talking of these, or other qualities, considered formally as virtues,

Virtues, they being physical, only as inherent, and emaning from the constitution; which, originally, is neutral, either to good or bad; and thus they may be better termed flexibility, or inflexibility of temper, than fortitude or docility, which are of moral origin.

I shall be told, that the docility of women, is apt to degenerate into levity; and I answer, that the fortitude of men, is as near a kin to obstinacy. Firmness in good, I own to be often productive of great benefits; but, it will also be granted, that, obstinacy in evil, is the cause of great mischiefs. As to saying, that an invincible adherence to good or evil, belongs only to angels, I answer, that this is not

so very certain, as not to be denied by many great divines; and many properties, which, in superior natures, arise from their excellency, in inferior essences, proceed from their imperfection. Angels, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas, the more perfect they are, the fewer their modes of understanding; whereas in men, a limitation of ideas is a defect. In angels, study would be a blemish, and clog to their intellects; whereas, it enlightens and enlarges those of man.

The prudence of man, is counterbalanced by the candour of women; though a greater value is due to the latter, as it would be evidently much better for mankind, that every individual were very candid, than very prudent

dent. Poets, in their pictures of the golden age, described men open, frank and friendly, not a word of prudence and sagacity.

If it be objected, that a great deal of what is called candour in woman, is weakness and indiscretion; I reply, that not less of man's vaunted prudence, is fraud, duplicity, and treachery, which is much worse. And, even that indiscreet frankness of the heart, sometimes disclosing itself, without consulting reason, is good, considered as a mark or sign of the person's disposition. No body being ignorant of his own vices, he who is conscious of their multitude, or infamous, is careful to stop up every chink of his heart, against the snares

of curiosity. He who lives irregularly in his house, seldom leaves the door open for observation. Circumspection, though very compatible with goodness, is the inseparable companion of malignity, and, on the other hand, he who readily discharges his mind, knows it to contain nothing which can give much offence. Thus, the candour of woman is always esteemable, as a perfection, when agreeable to right reason; and when otherwise, as a good sign of inward purity.

SECTION IV.

Besides the good qualities before expressed, must be added to the fair-sex's account, modesty, the most beautiful, and most excellent of all; and
so

so congenial to woman, as not to leave them, even in death, if Pliny is to be credited; who tells us, that the bodies of drowned men, float with their face upward, and those of drowned women, downwards; *veluti pudori defunctorum parcente natura*, lib. 7. cap. 17. *Nature, as it were, sparing the modesty of women, dying in this manner.*

Another philosopher being asked what colour most became a woman's face, answered both wittily and truly, that of modesty; and, I really esteem it; one of the most amiable excellencies in the women, above the men. Modesty is a rampart thrown up by nature, between virtue and vice; an ingenious Frenchman calls it, the shade of fine souls,

and the visible impress of virtue; and St. Barnard, enlarging on its excellence, terms it, the gem of good manners, the flambeau of purity, the sister of continence, the guard of reputation, the glory of life, the seat of virtue, the penegyric of the temper, and the ensign of every lovely quality (Serm. 86, in Cant.) The sullen Diogenes himself, calls it the tint of virtue; it is in reality, the strong redoubt, covering the whole castle of the soul, against the batteries of vice, and which, as Gregory Naziansen says, being once beaten down, or surrendered, every wickedness, makes its way in without resistance.

Protinus extincto subeunt mala cuncta pudore.

The extinction of modesty, is the inlet to every evil.

It

It will be said, that shame is, to be sure, an excellent preservation against outward acts, but having no influence on the inward assent and deliberations of the mind, the way still lies open for vice to perpetrate its schemes through those invisible assaults, which are not to be kept off by the fence of blushing modesty: and, were it so, still is modesty a most valuable preservative, as preventing crimes without number, and all their fatal consequences. But, on reflection, it will appear to be a guard, if not entirely, yet, in a great measure, against even silent and invisible irruptions, that they do not break out beyond the hidden recesses of the soul: internal stimulations to vice, seldom obtruding

on him, who does not foment them by commission; and this is what strengthens vicious inclinations, so as to strike their roots deep, and to be continually bringing forth pernicious fruit; without these, depravity may indeed, insinuate itself into the mind, but its stay is short, as that of a stranger; it takes not up its abode, as one of the family, and much less, as mistress of the house

The passions, when kept at short allowance, and apart from those objects which foment them, flag and carry on their operations but languidly, especially in persons of delicate modesty. The intercourse between the heart and the visage, is so open and ready, that they will watch over any
secret

secret machinations carrying on in the privacy of the heart, lest they should break forth to public view in the countenance. And, indeed, the latent motions, are continually betraying themselves on the cheeks, and there is no other way of forming conjectures on objects, invisible in themselves, than by the hue of shame; and thus the fear, lest the movements of the soul be read in the countenance, may, in woman, be a salutary check against the internal risings either of voluptuousness, or malignity.

To the premises, may be added, that in many women, their modesty has been such, as to stand in awe of their very selves. This height of modesty, so excellently discussed by the
most

most ingenious father Veyras, in one of his sermons, is so far from being merely idle and imaginary, as some low thoughted minds pronounce, is real and powerfully prevails in those of a more refined cast. This Demetrius Phalereus well knew, when instructing the youth of Athens, he told them; within doors, respect your fathers; abroad, all who see you; and, when alone, respect yourselves.

SECTION V.

The endowments, which I have on evident grounds, attributed to women, balance, and perhaps surpass the qualities which distinguish men, but, who shall decide this process? Were it my province, my verdict would
be

be very concise, that the qualities, in which women excel, tend to make them better in themselves, and the talents, in which men are superior, make them better, that is, more useful to the public; but, I being only a council, must not take on myself to act the judge; so for the present, the cause must remain undecided. And, were I authorized, still, must there be a farther hearing; as men will not be wanting to reply, that the good qualities, which I attribute to women, are common to both sexes. Granted; but, the qualities of men being likewise common to both sexes, therefore, not to puzzle the question, it will be necessary to specify distinctly, on the side of each sex, those talents and qualities which are most common to it, and, in a high degree. I grant, that there are
men,

men, who are docile, candid, and modest; I add, that the blush, which is a good sign in women, is still better in men, being expressive, both of a quick sense, and a good disposition, as Barclay says, more than once, in his *Satyricon*, and the Barclay's Suffrage, all literati will allow to be of weight; and though, I do not affirm the blush, to be an infallible sign, yet, by what has come within the compass of my observation, little good is to be expected from an audacious boy.

In several individuals of our sex, I repeat it, are seen though less frequently, the amiable qualities which shine in the other, but this by no means turns the scale in our favour, and is counterpoized, by many women being eminent

eminent for those endowments on which men value themselves.

SECTION VI.

For eminence in political abilities, a thousand princesses stand on record. Never will be forgotten the first woman, in whom history begins to disperse the obscurity of fable, I mean Semiramis, who though in her infancy fed by pigeons, afterwards soared beyond the flight of eagles, causing not only her hereditary subjects left her by her husband, to pay her an implicit obedience, but likewise reduced all the neighbouring nations to subjection, and even the most remote; extending her conquests to Ethopia on one side, and on the other to Judea. Nor Artemesia, Queen of Caria,

Caria, who not only preserved the most affectionate attachment of that kingdom, during a long widowhood; but when attacked by the Rhodians, she, by means of two very singular stratagems in two actions, cut off the enemies troops; and passing without delay from the defensive to the offensive part, soon made a conquest of that island, which a little before had attempted her dominions. Nor the two Aspasia, to whose admirable conduct, Paricles, the husband of one, entirely committed the government of his dominions; and Cyrus, son of Darius Nothus, a gallant to the other, placed the like confidence in her abilities, and both to their great advantage. Nor the very prudent Phile, daughter to Antipater, whom

whom he used to consult, even when a girl, and who afterwards rescued her spouse, the rash and giddy Demetrius, out of a thousand difficulties. Neither the artful Livia, whose finesse, seems to have got the better of all Augustus's sagacity; for had he known her, never would he have allowed her such an ascendancy over him. Nor the contriving Agrippina, whose artifices proved so destructive, both to herself and the world, all her thoughts concentrating, without regard to means, in raising her son Nero to the throne. Neither the learned Amalasunta, who not only understood the language of all the nations subject to the Roman Empire, but presided over the state, during the tempestuous minority of her son Athalric, with such steadiness and prudence.

Neither

Neither (passing over very many others, and drawing nearer to our own time) will ever be forgotten, Elizabeth, Queen of England, a woman, in whose composition, *the three graces and the three furies, had an equal band*, and whose conduct as a sovereign, would be the perpetual admiration of Europe, had not her vices perverted her abilities, and her political character been stained with the blood of the virtuous Mary, Queen of Scotland. Nor Catharine de Medicis, Queen of France *, whose sagacity in negotiations

* A French author, however, gives this shocking account of that political princess. "She seemed formed to confound and destroy; her soul was like a being infected in its very germ, that
"grown

tions for maintaining the balance of the two clashing parties of the Catholics and Calvinists, and for prevent-

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"grown up, it becomes a scourge. A power
 "without commotions, would have had no re-
 "lish for her. Tempests were her element, and
 "she would have stirred up dissensions in the
 "most quiet and submissive court; but nothing
 "better unfolds the atrocity of her temper, than
 "her manner of training up her children. One
 "of their common recreations was cock-fight-
 "ing, bull-baiting, dogs and other animals
 "fighting against one another; and when there
 "was to be any uncommon execution, she car-
 "ried them thither; and to make them no less
 "libidinous than blood-thirsty, she, from time
 "to time, made little entertainments, where
 "her maids of honour, with their hair loose, and
 "chaplets of flowers on their heads, served at
 "table half naked. It was this same political
 "princess, who chiefly planned and conducted
 "the massacre of the Huguenots, commonly
 "called

ing the downfall of the crown, brings to mind the dexterity of rope-dancers, who, by their ready management of the two opposite weights, keep themselves safe in their apparent dangerous situation, to the no small entertainment of the spectators. Eminent as the before mentioned princesses were, they would have been rivalled in the conduct of government by her Catholic

lie

called the massacre of Paris, though it was no less horrible in several other cities of the kingdom, particularly at Lyons; and the common executioner of that city, deserves honourable commemoration; for the governor ordering him to go and dispatch some who were in the public prisons, he made answer, *that he never did any business, but in due form of law.* Here, adds the author, the man, of all others, the vilest by profession, shews more honour than a queen and all her council."

fic Majesty, Queen Isabella, had she been a sovereign, as she was a Queen. Instances however were not wanting, in which she displayed a consummate wisdom. And Laurance Beyerlink says, in his panagyric on her, that there was nothing great done in her time, which was not in part or totally owing to her: *Quid magni in regno, sine illa, imò nisi per illam ferè gestum est?* The discovery of the new world, that event so glorious to Spain, would certainly never have been accomplished, had not Isabella's magnanimity prevailed over Ferdinand's indolence and apprehensions.

Lastly, which is still preferable, it appears to me, though I do not positively assert it, that, among the Queens

who enjoyed a long reign, most of them are celebrated in history, as excellent monarchs. But such is the unhappiness of poor women, that against so many illustrious examples, they are perpetually reproached with a Branchaut, a Fredegonde, the two Joannas of Naples, and a few others; though the two former were superlatively wicked *, they were possessed of an uncommon capacity.

Nor

* Abbé Velly, in his history of France, gives a different account of this princess. Clotaire ordered Brumehaut to be brought to him, at the head of the army, where loading her with invective and accusations, as indecent, as ill grounded, the soldiery tumultuously called out, she deserved to die; she was accordingly tortured for three days, and walked upon a camel all about the camp, amidst every insult and indignity; then she was tied to the tail of a horse,
that

Nor is the notion so universal as is imagined, that the crown never sits well on a female head; for Pliny tells us that in Meroe, an inland or peninsula, as the moderns will have it, formed by the Nile in Ethiopia, women

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have

that had never been broken, which dragged her over the flints, and amidst the thorns and briers, and soon tore off her flesh; the remainder of her body, was committed to the flames and burned to ashes. Thus horribly died the consort of the greatest monarch, who, till that time, had reigned over France, the descendant, and mother of so many kings; that Queen, whom bishop Fortunatus, makes the very picture of beauty, and the graces, whom Gregory of Tours sets forth as the model of decorum and virtue, of discretion, and sweetness of temper, and whom St. Gregory the Pope, represents as continually employing herself in the several duties of a pious Queen, a virtuous regent, and truly christian mother.

have constantly swayed the sceptre for many years. Farther, Cornelius a lapide, speaking of the Queen of Sheba, who was one of them, is of opinion that her dominions extended a great way out of the circuit of Meroe, and might comprehend all Ethiopia, grounding himself on the words of our Saviour, who calls her *Queen of the South*. So that, as may be seen in Thomas Cornelio, a certain author affirms the island or peninsula of Meroe, to be larger than Great-Britain, and thus they were no petty Queens, even though their territories did not reach beyond Meroe. Aristotle lib. II. Polit. Cap. VII. says, that among the Lacedemonians, the women had a great share in the affairs of government; and this, in conformity

to the laws left them by their wise legislator Lycurgus.

Likewise in Borneo, a large island in the Indian Sea, women, according to Mandeflo's account in the second volume of Olearius, hold the sovereignty as a natural right, whilst the grand prerogative of their husbands is to fill the best employments under them. The inhabitants of the island of Formosa, lying south of China, have from experience, such a high esteem, both of the conduct and piety of women, that to them alone is committed the sacerdotal office, with every thing appertaining to religion, and even in politics, they are in some measure, equal to the sovereign, their opinion being reverently deferred to,

as interpreters of the good pleasure of their deities. All parts indeed, afford instances of the value placed on women, and the regard paid to female nature.

P. Besson in his *Syria Sancta*, says, that the Syrian women, from a principle of discretion, are very much inclined to silence, especially in public, being in this respect, like the *Cigalas*, of which, only the male chirps. Another observation of his is, that the Kelbens, a sect of christians there, never eat of any female animal, though, whether this proceeds from respect, or aversion, may be a question. Among fruits, the small lemons, which are extremely sour, are accounted males, the females, if Mesve's word may be taken, having nothing

nothing of that strong acidity. A law of the wise Solon, plainly shews, that among animals, the females were less mischievous than the males, allowing five drachms to him who killed a wolf, and only one for taking a she-wolf, as doing less harm. *Meursius in Solone.* The Romans so far preferred the ladies to men, that the officers of their magistrates, who made every body clear the way for their more convenient passing along, durst not require any such thing of a woman; and when with their husbands in a coach, these, says Festus, were, on their account, allowed to pass by without alighting, which, otherwise, they would have been obliged to, as an established mark of respect to magistracy. It might, therefore, be imagined, that

it

it is only to strength, men owe the superiority we claim over the female sex, which so generally yields to the other, either from prudence or other motives, that I lately read, in an account of *Guinea*, this droll observation, that it is an universal custom among all the Parroots there, for the female, in honour to the male, to place him on the right side, she, herself, standing, as out of condescending respect, at the left. The Athenian philosopher, Leontius, however, shewed at his death, that he had a greater value for his daughter Athanais, than for all his sons, dividing his riches, which were very great, among them, and giving only a hundred crowns to her, for this reason, which afterwards appeared a kind of prophecy, that her
merit

merit and fortune, would procure her a good settlement; and, in effect, the Empress Pulcheria, had such an esteem for her, as to marry her to her son Theodosius the younger, by the name of Eudoxia.

The usual practice of nations, is, however, more agreeable to reason, as correspondent to the divine decree, signified to our primitive mother, in Paradise, when subjection to men was imposed on her, and all her daughters in her name; only that refractory impatience with which people, often spurn at female government, when the public tranquility brings them under it, stands in need of an amendment, as likewise that preposterous conceit of our sex, by which, a weak
child

child has been preferred for the sovereignty to an adult woman, and the Persians, carried this partiality to so ridiculous an excess, that the widow of one of their kings, being left pregnant, and the magi having, on a consultation, given it as their opinion, that the embryo was a male, they placed a crown on the queen's belly, and proclaimed the foetus king, giving him the name of *Sapor*, before he was born.

SECTION VII.

Thus far of political prudence, contenting ourselves with a very few instances, though multipliable to numbers without end. It would be superfluous to talk of domestic prudence, when we every day see houses happy
and

and decent under the management of women, and thrown into ruin and disorder by men.

Proceed we now to courage, a quality which men are pleased to look on as the peculiar characteristic, as peculiar of their sex; and I will readily grant, that heaven has here given them the great portion, yet, not peculiar patrimony, from which the other sex are totally excluded.

Not an age has passed in which many valiant women have not signalized themselves; and, omitting the Heroines in scripture, and the female martyrs to the gospel, as exploits in which the divine help intervened in an especial manner, are not to be attributed

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tributed to the sex's prowess. Numbers of women, eminent for fortitude and intrepidity, present themselves in crowds to the memory. And with Semiramis, Artemisia, Thomyris and Zenobia, no less may be paralleled Arataphila, spouse to Nicostratus, governor of Cyrenia, in Lybia, who immortalized herself, by a very extraordinary assemblage of mental excellencies, the most tender concern for her country, the most daring valour, and the most inventive address. Having in order to free her country from the savage tyranny of her husband, and revenge his first wife, by whose clandestine death, he had made his way to her arms, put herself at the head of a conspiracy, she deprived Nicostratus, both of the kingdom, and life.

And

And Leander, brother to Nicostratus, having succeeded him, in his crown and beginning to imitate his cruelty, she likewise, by joining address to courage, rid her country of this second tyrant, and at length, crowned her patriotism, by declining the sovereignty, which, in gratitude to her great services, performed with such risque, the Cyreneans had offered to her; Dripetina, daughter of the magnanimous Mithridates, and who could not be diverted from accompanying her father in all his dangerous expeditions, in the whole course of which, she displayed that strength of body and mind, which may seem to have been prognosticated by the singularity of being born with two rows of teeth; and being, after her father's defeat, besieged by

by Manlius Riscus, in a castle, which could not stand a long defence, she chose to deprive herself of life, rather than yield to the consequences of captivity. Clelia, who, having fallen into the hands of Porfenna, king of the Tuscans, found means by contrivance and labour, to break her prison, and passing the Tiber on horse-back, while others say, she swam over, arrived safely at Rome. Arria, spouse to Cecina Petus, who being engaged in Camillus's conspiracy against the Emperor Claudius, determined not to survive him, and being admitted to Cecina, exhorted him to prevent the ignominy of a public execution. She herself, set him the example, plunging a poniard into her breast. Anepponina, who, on account of her husband

husband Julius Sabinus, having in goal, taken on himself the title of Cæsar, sustained various tortures, rather than answer the captious questions put to her, and on Vespasian's order for putting her to death, she, heroically told him, that she preferred it to the vexation of seeing the throne possessed by one so very unworthy of it.

And, lest it be thought, the more modern ages do not afford more valiant women, *behold a maid of Orleans!* that pillar which supported the tottering monarchy of France in its extremity, contrary to all appearance and expectation; that the English imputed her exploits to infernal assistance, while the French extolled them as the consequences of a divine
F impulse,

impulse, for in that universal consternation of the soldiery and people, nothing could sooner raise their desponding minds, than working a persuasion that Heaven had declared itself on their side. A valiant and spirited country lass was introduced to the king, as the instrument whom heaven, who seeth otherwise than man, chose for his deliverance a Margaret of Denmark, who, in the 14th century, conquered in person the kingdom of Sweden, taking prisoner King Albert himself, that the authors of that age, called her the second Semiramis. Behold a Marulla, born at Leon, an island in the Archipelago, who, when the Turks were besieging the citadel of Cochin, seeing her father

ther

ther slain, ran and snatched up his sword, brandished it, and called to the garrison to renew the action, and placing herself at the head of them, charged the enemy with such impetuosity, as not only to beat them back, but force the Pascha Soliman to raise the siege: this valour, the Venetian governor recompenced with the choice of any officer in his whole army, and a suitable portion. Behold a *Blanca de Rossi*, wife to Baptista Porta, the patron officer, who, after exposing herself with the greatest intrepidity, in the defence of the town of Bassano, the place being soon taken by treachery and her husband put to death, this lady, in the want of other means to withstand his brutality, threw herself out of a window; but, after she was

cured and recovered, possibly against her wish, the barbarian gratified his desire, by the combined force of his slaves on which, she put an end to her anguish, and vindicated her conjugal fidelity, depriving herself of life in her husband's vault, which she had caused to be opened for that purpose. Behold a *Banna*, a poor country damsel in the Valteline, whom a Parmezan officer of note, by name Pedro Brunoro, happened to alight on tending sheep, and taken with her vivacity, made her his mistress; but she, by her amiable behaviour, soon made herself his wife, and continuing to accompany him as before, not only behaved on all occasions with the precipitate intrepidity of a common soldier, but acquired so complete a knowledge in the art

art of war, that several enterprizes were committed to her conduct. Behold *Amaria Pita*, that Galician heroine, who, when the English besieged Corunna, in the year 1589, and had even made a lodgement in the breach, and the despairing garrison were all for capitulating, this gallant woman, after reproaching our men in a passionate stile entirely suited to their capacity and profession, snatching a sword and target from a soldier, called out: *Let those who have a spark of honour follow me.* She ardently flew towards the breach, and the soldiery catching the noble flame, rushed on the English, that after killing fifteen hundred of them, among whom was a brother of the lord Norris the commander of the land forces, obliged them to raise the siege.

For this act of prowess, Philip II. rewarded Pita with the rank and pay of an ensign during life, and Philip III. settled the rank and pay of a reformed ensign on her descendants. Behold a Maria de Estrade, the wife of Pedro Sanchez Farfan, a soldier of Cortez's, who well deserves to be honourably mentioned for her many and very extraordinary exploits, of which, Father de Torquemada, gives such a particular relation in his first volume of the *Indian Monarchy*; speaking of the deplorable Sally, which Cortez made out of Mexico, after the death of Montezuma, he says of her: *In this bloody action, Maria de Estrada, eminently signalized her courage, performing wonders with her sword and target, and bearing down the enemies ranks, as*

if

if she had been one of the brave and strongest men in the world; forgetful as it were, of her sex, and putting on all the valour, which, only men of the greatest honour, display on such trying occasions; and the wonders she performed were such as struck the enemy with much terror, as they raised admiration in the Spaniards. And when, in the next chapter, he gives an account of the battle, fought between the Spaniards and Mexicans, in the valley of Otumba, he revives the memory of this illustrious woman, in the following words. In this battle, Maria de Estrada, shewed herself equal to the reputation she had acquired at Mexico, charging on horseback, with a courage, not inferior to any in the whole army, and the ardour of a young warrior,

rior, eager in the pursuit of preferment or glory. Behold an Anne de Brux, a Fleming Virago, born in a village near Lisle, who, purely to preserve her honour from the insults of the soldiery, entered into the army, where she served a considerable time, and distinguished herself in many warm actions, that she came to be a lieutenant, and when being afterwards taken prisoner by the French, she discovered her sex, the Marshal de Senetterrè offered her a company in the French service, which she declined, rather than serve against her natural sovereign; and having obtained her discharge, she returned home, and ended her days in the tranquility of a convent.

My

My having hitherto omitted the Amazons, in whom this subject is so much interested, was with a view to speak of them separately. Some authors, indeed, deny the very existence of such females, contrary to many more, who are positive in the reality of it. All we can grant, is, that the real history of the Amazons, has been adulterated with a gross mixture of fable, as their killing all their male children, living totally separate from the other sex, and going to them once a year, for the sake of propagation. And in the same mint I imagine to have been coined their encounters, with Hercules and Theseus, Penthesilea, going to the assistance of distressed Troy, as likewise, perhaps, their

Queen

Queen Thalestris's visit to Alexander ; yet, I think it presumptuous, to deny that there was in Asia, a formidable tribe of martial women, called by the name of Amazons, when the truth of it is attested by so many reputable and ancient writers. And even, if this be denied, and we are deprived of our Asiatic Amazons, yet is not the glory of women eclipsed? The other three parts of the World, America, Africa, and Europe, afford other Amazons. In America, they were seen by the Spaniards, marching, armed along the greatest river in the World, the Maranon; and, on account of that singular phenomenon, they gave it the name, which it retains to this day; *the River of the Amazons*. A province of the empire of Monotapa,

motapa in Africa is chiefly inhabited by such females, and they are said to be the best soldiers that prince has in all his various dominions; though a certain geographer of repute, makes the country inhabited by these war-like women, to be a distinct state.

If Europe affords no country with a military corps composed of females, yet they, who on some occasion or other, have formed themselves into a body, and defeated the enemies of their country, may be entitled to the name of Amazons. Such were the women of Beauvais, in France, who, on the day appointed for an assault, when that city was besieged by the Burgundians, in the year 1472, putting themselves under the command

mand of Joan Hatchet, attacked and beat off the enemy. Hatchet, herself, having thrown down from the wall a daring officer, who first fixed the colours on it. Her successful courage, is to this day, commemorated in that city, by a yearly festival, the women in the procession, taking place of the men. Such were the female inhabitants of the Grecian islands famous for the victory of Lepanto, as fought in an adjacent sea. The year before, the Turks having attacked the principal Island, the Venetian governor and the far greater part of the men, were seized with such a panic, that in the night time, they withdrew out of the island. The women remaining, being animated by a priest named Antonio Rosoneo to defend the place, they effectually complied with his

his exhortations, to the great honour of their sex, and the no less disgrace of ours.

The women, who put an end to life, by their own hands, are by no means adduced as examples of virtue, *but of a faulty excess of bravery*, which is sufficient for our purpose.

S E C T I O N VIII.

Concerning magnanimous women, I must not omit a point on which men sport their wit, as that in which the weakness of women, mostly betrays itself: the keeping of secrets. Cato the censor, thought so hardly of them in this respect, that for a man to trust a secret to any woman whatsoever, was one of the greatest weaknesses

nesses, that could be committed; but this was disproved by Porcia, daughter to Cato the younger, and wife to Marcus Brutus, who prevailed on her husband not to conceal from her, the great secret of the conspiracy against Cæsar, having as a proof of her fortitude and secrecy, given herself a severe wound in the thigh, and bearing all the anguish of it, without making it known to him or any one else.

Pliny says, on the credit of the Magi, that the heart of a certain bird, being applied to a woman when sleeping, causes her to disclose all her secrets. And in another part, he says the same thing of the tongue of a certain insect. One would not think that women were so prone to disclose their

their mind, when magic ransacks the secrets of nature, to find keys for opening the outlets of their hearts. But we, no less than Pliny himself, laugh at those inventions; and allow that there are very few women capable of keeping a secret, but the most experienced politicians, will in return, allow that to be a weakness not at all peculiar to the sex, but, that a man is scarce to be found who may safely be trusted with a secret of importance, when any thing is to be got by making it known. Indeed, were not these gems very scarce, princes would not put so high a value on them.

Instances, however, are not wanting of women who have kept secrets
with

with invincible firmness. Pythagoras, in his last hours, delivered all his writings which contained the most abstruse mysteries of his philosophy to his daughter Damo, charging her never to make them public, which she so faithfully obeyed, that even when reduced to great poverty, and she might have sold these books for a considerable sum, she chose rather to persevere in obeying her father, than free herself from the distresses of poverty.

The resolute Arætaphila, of whom mention has been made above, intending to take away her husband, Nicostratus's life, by a poisonous draught, rather than attempt it by forming a conspiracy, was surprised in

in the preparation of it; and being put to the torture, to make known the whole secret, so far was the pain from depriving her of the government of her heart, and the use of her reason, that, instead of making known her intention, she artfully brought the tyrant to believe that the potion was a philtre for increasing his passion towards her; and this ingenious fiction, proved a real philtre, Nicostratus loving her more than he had before, imagining, that her endeavour to excite a supernatural love in him, must be the effect of some such passion in herself.

In the conspiracy, formed by Aristogiton, against Hippias the tyrant of Athens, a court lady, who knew

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the

the accomplices was put to the torture, but to convince the tyrant, that the secret was not to be extorted from her, bit out her tongue in his presence.

In Piso's conspiracy against Nero, several of the principal personages of Rome, were, at the first appearance of the torture, terrified into a confession, that Lucan himself, so spirited in his poetry, charged his own mother, and others their most intimate friends, as accomplices; yet could neither scourge, nor fire, nor other sufferings, force the least discovery from Epicharis a common woman, who was privy to the whole affair.

And I myself, knew a woman, who being examined on the rack, concern-
ing

ing a very atrocious crime, committed by her masters, outstood that excruciating trial, and only to save her masters, not herself; for what little share she had in the guilt, was from ignorance, and by order and other circumstances, as could not, with the least colour of equity, have subjected her to any such punishment. But there would be no end of enumerating instances of women, from whom engines could not extort a secret; yet, I have heard a person, who had been present at many such procedures, say, that he has known a great many to confess, when they came to be stripped in order for execution, but very few, who, after going through this outrage to their modesty, were ever brought to a compliance by the scourge. Can

we forbear admiring that sex, on which, amidst all its tender sensibility, a regard to modesty, has a greater effect, than all the strength of an executioner*.

Some

*I shall add one instance of female magnanimity, which cannot but affect all who have any sensibility. Henry IV. of France, had besieged the town of Falaise, and preparations were making for storming it, when a young tradesman, by name la Chenaye, who was in love with, and equally loved by a girl suitable to him, proposed to her a way which he was contriving, for getting out of town, and thus putting her in safety: as I am persuaded, answered she, that it is only from a concern for me, that you can think of forsaking your countrymen now that they are going to fight, your proposal does not lessen either my love or my esteem for you; and as a proof of it, I am ready to unite my destiny to yours, come, I will instantly give you
my

Some persons, I make no doubt, will charge this parallel, between women and men, with flattery; but I refer them to Seneca, whose stoicism, so far from flattering, spared no person; yet, he puts women absolutely on a level with men, for any valuable talents and qualities. His words are
 G 3 these:

my hand, but it shall be upon the breach. At these words, she hastily moved forward without regarding the tears or intreaties of her lover: *Both, says Mezeray, fought with such signal courage, that Henry IV. who always loved valour, though in an enemy, ordered, by all means possible to save their lives; but La Chenaye, being killed by a musket shot, his mistress refused quarters, and continued fighting, till feeling herself mortally wounded, she threw herself on her lover's body, mixing her blood with his, and embracing him as she expired.*

these: *Quis autem dicat naturam ma-
liqùe cum muliebribus ingeniis egisse, &
virtutes illarum in arctum retraxisse?*
*Par illis, mihi crede, vigor, par ad bo-
nesta (libeat) facultas est. Laborem, do-
loremque ex æquo si consuevere patiuntur,*
in *Consol. ad Marciam*. Who will
say that nature has not dealt kindly
with women, bestowing on them, but
a very slender share of virtue. No;
they have an equal strength of mind,
equal disposition and ability for virtue
and decorous actions; and with a
little use, bear toil and pain, as well
as we. *Consolatory Lr. to Marcia.*

SECTION IX.

Let us now come to the grand bat-
tery against female intellects, in which

I own

I own, that if reason does not support me, I have little to expect from authority; for writers on this subject, scarce any excepted, are so wedded to the common opinion, that they, one and all, make little account of female intellects. I may, indeed, offer as a reply to most of those books, the fable which Carducio of Scicily, mentions to another purpose, in his *dialogues on painting*.—A man and a lion, travelling together, they fell into a dispute who were bravest, men or lions, each cried up his own kind, till coming to a fountain adorned with very beautiful sculptures, the man took notice, that on the top of it, was represented a man rending the jaws of a lion: Now, says he, turning to his adversary, you will no longer pretend

to talk of lions being as brave as men, only look there, see what becomes of your fellow brute. A fine argument indeed, answered the lion, grimly smiling: that figure was made by a man, and so no wonder, he has given man the better in the struggle; but, take my word for it, that had a lion been the artist, he would have altered their position, and have given the man for a good meal to the lion.

Lucrètia Marinella, a learned Venetian Lady, among other works, wrote a book intituled, *the Excellency of Women, in comparison of the Faults and Vices of Men*. The judicious Juan de Cartaegena, says, that he saw and read that book, with great pleasure, at Rome; and I have also seen it in the

the king's library, at Madrid. What is certain herein, is, that neither she, nor me, can be judges in this cause, being parties; so that the question must be referred to the angels, who being of no sex, are neutral.

And first, they who vilify the understanding of women, so as to make it only mere instinct, are unworthy of being admitted to the dispute; and such are they, who dare affirm as a maxim, that the very top of female capacity, is to govern a hen-roost.

Such was that prelate, cited by Don Francisco Manuel, in his *guide to married women*, who says, that the most knowing woman, knew how to lay in order a chest of clean linen.

The

The author of such a speech, might be respectable on other accounts, but such sayings, do him little honour; for, in the very softest construction, they can be allowed to be no better than jocular hyperboles. That women are capable of presiding over religious communities, is manifest from numberless instances; and that our times afford women equal to the government of states, we have an illustrious instance in the present Czarina of Muscovy.

To talk thus contemptuously of women, denotes a superficial man. Seeing female knowledge to be in general limited to those domestic employments in which they have been trained up; they from thence infer
(though

(though without knowing, that they do infer, as being unacquainted with reflection) that they are not capable of any thing farther; whereas, every smatterer in logick, knows, that the absence of the act does not imply the absence of the power; and thus, if women do not know more, is no conclusive argument, against their having a talent for greater employments.

No man knows more than what he has studied or applied himself to, yet to infer that his capacity cannot reach beyond what he has made the subject of his application, would be equally illogicale and ill-natur'd. Were all men, as the celebrated Sir Thomas More represents them in his Utopia, to give themselves up to agriculture,

as to be ignorant of every thing else, would that warrant an assertion, that men are incapable of any thing else? Among the Drusi, a people of Palestine, women are the only depositaries of learning; reading and writing, being almost universal among them, and all the literature in that nation, be it much or little, is treasured up in the intellects of women, and totally unknown to men, who, on their part, mind only agriculture, war and trade. Did such a custom prevail all over the world, the women would, unquestionably, look upon men to labour under a natural incapacity for learning, as men now entertain the same idea of women; but such a judgment would be very wrong and injurious, so that, which at present prevails among

among men to the disparagement of women, may be said to deserve no better predicament.

SECTION X.

And perhaps, it is from the same principle, though with something more courtesy and regard to women, that, Father Malebranche, in his *enquiry after truth*, gives them the preference to men, in the discernment of sensible things; at the same time, placing them far below us, for abstract ideas. For though, he accounts for this from the softness of the brain; these physical causes, it is well known, every one investigates them in his own way, after experience has assured him of the effects,

effects, or he conceives himself assured. And this very author falls into that intellectual defect, of which he himself sets up to cure all mankind; that is, the error arising from common prejudices, and ill-digested principles, as unquestionably, he pronounced this judgment, either being carried away by the common current, or as having observed, that women of character for good sense, reasoned more happily and more to the point, than men, as to sensitive things, and as shallowly and absurdly in abstracts; but let not this be attributed to any disparity of talent, when it is, in a great measure, owing to the difference of application and practice. Women being much more employed in cookery, and the embellishments of dress than men, their

their thoughts, consequently run more on things of that nature, and thus they talk of them with more judgment and fluency, whereas, scarce one woman of a thousand, exercises her faculties on problems, or abstract ideas, and thus it is nothing strange, that they should acquit themselves but awkwardly in conversations on those points. Be it further observed, that women, whose contemplative turn of mind delights in reasoning on the refinements of platonic love, where this happens to come on the carpet, will eclipse a man of the greatest parts, who has not thought it worth his while to reflect on these chimeras.

A person, whatever be his natural capacity, will, generally speaking, appear

pear but ignorant or short sighted, in
 matters foreign from his station, or
 on which he has not bestowed any at-
 tention. A ploughman, though na-
 turally sagacious and witty, which
 sometimes is the case, if he has never
 thought of any thing but his tillage,
 must, whenever state affairs come to
 be talked of, make but a poor figure,
 in comparison of a mere smatterer in
 politics, and should the most consum-
 mate politician, if only a politician,
 take on him to talk of drawing up
 armies, and conducting sieges, he
 would say a thousand absurdities, that
 an officer, understanding his trade,
 will wonder at his impertinence, as
 Hanibal laughed at that great Asiatic
 orator, who presumed to harangue on
 military

*The whole of this man's reasoning is
 that education will improve the
 soldier from hence that they*

military things, before him and king
Antiochus.

The case in question, is the very
same; a woman of very clear intel-
lects, has her thoughts taken up all
day, about her domestic concerns,
without hearing any discourse of a su-
perior nature, or, if any edifying sub-
ject is introduced, hears it only super-
ficially. Her husband, though greatly
her inferior in natural endowments,
is often in company with learned
ecclesiastics, or expert politicians, in
whose conversation, he acquires varie-
ty of knowledge, becomes acquainted
with the course and conduct of pub-
lic affairs, and of many other impor-
tant particulars. If he happens to be
talking before his wife, of these sub-

jects,
very inconclusively, he has only proved
intellect of men, but it by no means
equal in capacity to man.

jects, with which he has thus picked up some shallow acquaintance, and she says what comes into her mind, yet, her natural judgment being totally uninformed, what she says will almost necessarily be faulty, that her husband, and even others, who may happen to hear her, will think her an empty creature, hugging themselves with their knowledge, for which, however, they may thank good company.

This woman's case, is that of numberless others, who, though of much better parts than supercilious men, are ridiculed as incapable of talking on any solid or literary subjects. Our silence, or our talking amiss depends not so much on the want of talents,

as on the want of information and knowledge, without which, the very intellects of an angel, must labour under a deficiency; whilst men, though of an inferior capacity, shall insult over women, as evidently their superiors, though their superiority be all adventitious, gotten from books and conversation.

Another advantage of information is, that men are accustomed to think, argue, and talk on such subjects, as belonging to their sphere, or coming in their way; but to women, as *terra incognita*, things on which they very rarely think, nay, scarce can think, that when the conversation turns on such points, men may be said to talk premeditatedly, and women quite ex-

extemporarily, an advantage, which needs not be enlarged on. Lastly, men, by a mutual communication of their thoughts on such subjects, become partakers of each others lights, that in their conversations, besides their own reason, they make use of what they have collected from others, that sometimes an individual, shall in an argument utter the emanations of many understandings. But the conversations of women, instead of such sublime subjects, turning, and that at best, only on their works, and other household affairs, they impart no instruction to one another; that when called on to talk of the above subjects, it is of a sudden, and without any previous information, having never come in their way.

These

These advantages, by which a man of very dull parts talks both more fluently and judiciously on devised subjects than a woman of exceeding good sense, are of such weight, that in a dispute between the former and the other, he, at least among the superficial generation, shall pass for a man of very profound knowledge, and she be looked on as a simple creature.

For want of such reflections, it is that so many men, otherwise learned and sensible, entertain such contemptuous notions of the understanding of women; and the cream of the jest is, that they have been crying out so long, about womens being such giddy, short

fighited creatures, that many of the sex, have been brought to entertain such mean thoughts of themselves.

SECTION XI.

And even they, who, more agreeable to reason, as with a less excessive difference from the advantage, in understanding to be on men's side, vouchsafing to allow, that, here and there, such a thing as a woman of solid sense and understanding is to be found. I say, that in my opinion, even they would not have maintained this inequality between the two sexes, had they attended to the before-mentioned circumstances, by which women,

men, though of better parts, appear much inferior in colloquy.

Nor do I know any ground for this pretended inequality beyond that which I have mentioned, and the uncertainty of which I have laid open, for if I am told that it is demonstrated by experience, such experience I affirm to be delusory, and have proved its falsity in many articles. I shall farther, relatively to experience, adduce two eminent witnesses in behalf of women; the first, is that admirable Portuguese writer, Don Francisco, Emanuel *in his guide to married men.*

Every circumstance that can be desired, concurs to give this gentleman's

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suffrage

suffrage, a distinguished regard in the
 present debate; for besides his na-
 tural talents, he visited many coun-
 tries, was engaged in variety of affairs,
 and his genius being mixed with much
 festivity and politeness, he every where,
 as his writings plainly shew, insinuated
 himself among the ladies. Now, this
 author, not satisfied with putting wo-
 men on a level with men for intellects,
 rather allows them to be our superiors.
 For, in leaf 73 of the said book, after
 expatiating on the charge of imbecility
 against women, says, *I am of a very
 different opinion, and have all the rea-
 son in the world to believe, that there
 are many of very great parts; nay, I
 have seen and conversed with such in
 Spain, and other countries; and for
 that very reason, I think the quickness
 of*

of discernment, acuteness, and reasoning, in which they surpass us, ought to be tempered with great circumspection; and a little lower, as we cannot deprive women of that vivacity of understanding, with which nature hath formed them, we may at least keep them from the opportunities of sharpening it to their own danger, and our damage. The testimony of this author, as I have said, is of great weight, as besides his experience and capacity, he adds, that in the above composition, he has been far from favouring the women; and at the close of it, roundly charges himself with having been something too severe.

The second witness, is the very learned Abbe de Bellegarde, likewise
a courtier,

a courtier, and who acted his part on that celebrated theatre of the world, Paris. This author, in a book of his, intituled, *Curious Letters on Literature, and morality*, affirms the mind of women to be in no wise inferior to that of men for any science, art, or employment. I cannot say, I ever read this performance, but find it quoted on this head, in the *Journal de Trevoux*, for April 1702. The author of a *Journey in the Stage Coach, from Madrid to Alcala*, (who, whoever he be, has a masterly pen) is of the same opinion. Father Buffier, a celebrated French writer, enters into a formal proof of it, in his *Examen des Prejuges Vulgaires*.

SECTION.

SECTION XII.

Therefore, laying aside the so much boasted manifestation of experience, all that remains in proof of this supposed disparity of intellects, is, some physical reason; but I affirm, there is none, as it must reside either in an *entitative* disparity of souls, or a different organization, or different temperature in the bodies of both sexes.

The entitative inequality of souls I pass over, it being the common opinion of philosophers, that all rational souls are equal as to physical perfection; though, in behalf of the opposite opinion, St. Austin, Lib. XV. de Trinitate, Cap. XIII; is quoted, but
after

after a careful perusal of that chapter, I do not find, that it says a word about the matter. I likewise am not ignorant, that the faculty of Paris condemned a proposition, affirming that *the soul of Christ, our Lord and Saviour, was not more perfect, than the soul of the traitor Judas*, to which Mastrio, the noble Scotist answers, that such condemnation not having been confirmed by the apostolic see, does not bind us, and so it is. But, at the same time, I take on me to say, that such a proposition, in whatever book it be found, should be expunged as offensive, with regard to the illiterate, and as not clearly distinguishing in souls, the physical from the moral part. But this does not in any manner affect

affect the truth of the common opinion
for the entire physical equality of souls.

But, supposing souls to be essentially
unequal, how will they prove, or
make us believe, that God selected
the best for men, and left the less per-
fect for women? It becomes us rather
to believe, that the soul of the blessed
Virgin, would in such a case, be bet-
ter than that of any other mere crea-
ture; as the respectable Suarez affirms,
that, even in the physical part, it was
absolutely perfect; so that those wo-
men, who say that the soul is neither
male nor female, may stick to their
text, it is sound doctrine.

As to organization, I readily believe,
that its difference may induce a great
difference

difference in the operations of the soul, though, what organization is best adapted to the intellects, we know not. Aristotle advances, that people of a small head, are generally the most sensible. Before he committed this to paper, I am apt to think he took measure of his own. Others give it in favour of large heads. These may be concluded to have had none of the smallest heads, otherwise they would have sided with Aristotle. Cardinal Spondati, in his course of philosophy, says, that in Cardinal de Richlieu, the organs appertaining to mental operations, were double; and to that, he attributes the singular abilities of that minister. This duplication I understand, not with relation to number, that would be a prodigy, but to size
and

and magnitude. And this is agreeable to an opinion of many, that the greater the quantity of the brain, the greater share of reason; which they infer from the observation that man has, in proportion, more brain than any other animal. Others, (as Martinez, in his anatomy) setting aside both great and little heads, will have the middling to be best adapted to the intellects. With submission to those who, in forming an estimate of the worth of souls, take measure of the parts of the body, all who walk with their eyes open, know, that among the large headed men, there are both wits and oafs; and the like may be said of men with little heads. Did the different size of the head, or quantity of the brain, cause any disparity in the operations of the understanding,

understanding, men of different statures, would be found as different in their understanding and perception, both the skull and the brain being greater or less, according to the stature; whereas all the world knows the contrary.

Therefore, should Pliny have truth on his side, when he says that the substance of the brain in men is considerably larger than in women, (in which, however, I beg leave to suspend my judgment, till I consult some expert anatomist) this proves nothing: for, if the pre-eminence of understanding depends on this considerable excess of brain, such a man as Cervantes, or Quevedo, must have had forty or fifty times more brain than our town fool.

fool. And large bodied men must, in general, be more ingenious, and fitter for affairs of consequence, than those whom they can look over, as having more brain. The writer of this would be very much obliged to them, could they persuade him of any such thing, he having his share both of height and bulk.

I subscribe indeed to the opinion, that the strength, or weakness of the mental powers depends in a great measure, on different organization, but does not arise from any sensible difference of organization in the greater parts. It is from the insensible difference of the most minute, as the different texture or firmness of the subtile fibres, and the greater or less cavity,

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cleanliness,

cleanliness, and tenuity of those fine ducts, through which the spirits take their course; and of this we can know nothing, whether it be different in men or women; as beyond the ken of human sight. Neither the anatomist nor carthesian, with their best microscopes, can discern whether the pineal gland, to which they limit the soul's residence, be of a different texture in women, from what it is in men.

That it is not any sensible difference in organization, which causes a difference in the rational operations, at least, if not of a monstrous irregularity, is evident from men of different shapes being equally rational; and in men organized alike in form and appearance, there shall be a very great difference

difference in the faculties of their minds. Æsop the fabulist, was from head to foot, so misshapen, as scarce to make the appearance of a man; and his name has always continued to be used as the antonomasia of deformity and ugliness; yet, his genius has continued the admiration of all ages. Socrates was not many degrees above Æsop for comeliness of form and features, yet, does not all antiquity afford a finer genius. But granting that a different sensible organization implies different mental powers, what can be inferred from thence? Nothing: women being of a different formation from men only in those organs which nature has appointed for propagation, and not at all in those appertaining to reason.

SECTION XIII.

As little can this supposed inferiority of female intellects be grounded on the difference of constitution or temperature, not that I deny the temperature to have a considerable influence on the right or wrong use of the mental powers. I am rather persuaded that a difference of temperature, causes a greater difference in the operations, than a different organization; for every one must have experienced that according to the variations in his constitution, without any disorder in the organization, he is, more or less, fit for operations of any kind, and there is scarce a distemperature affecting the body, which

which does not at the same time, more or less, impede the functions of the soul. But the kind of constitution or temperature, most favourable to the exertion of the intellects, is not easily ascertained,

If Aristotle's opinion is to be followed, the female temperament must be allowed most adapted to this effect. This philosopher, who derives all the various phenomena from his four primary qualities, says, Sec. 14. *of his problems. quest. 15.* that men of a cold temperature, have more sense and discernment than those of a warmer constitution, though in the beginning of that same problem, he supposes the inhabitants of warm climates, to be more ingenious than those of the

cold (which I do not believe, as then the natives of Africa, would be more ingenious than the English and Dutch) for conformably to his opinion of the intenseness of his primary qualities he affirms from the force of the *Antiperistasis*, that men are of the hottest constitution in the coldest countries, and the coldest in the hottest. *Et enim, qui sedes frigidas habent, frigore loci obfistente, longe calidiores, quam sua sint natura, redduntur**. And so far below those of a colder constitution, does he place in point of reason, those of a very hot constitution, as to compare them with persons in a state of ebriety. *Itaque vinolentis admodum similes esse videntur,*

* In the inhabitants of a cold country, the renitency of the cold increases their natural heat.

dentur, nec ingenio valent quo prospiciant, rerumque rationes inquirant *. The philosopher, in classing the adust with the dull little thought of his disciple Alexander, or rather did it by way of resentment, for it is certain, he wrote most of his works, after Alexander had dismissed him on strong suspicions of treachery. And when retired to Athens, he had the fresh mortification of that prince's sending a present of thirty talents of gold to his school-fellow and competitor Zeno-crates, without the least mention of Aristotle; though, whether his resentment rose so high, that he should

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have

* They seem so many drunkards, quite incapable of forecast, or examining the reasons of things.

have engaged in a conspiracy with Antipater against Alexander's life, and proposed the manner of taking him off by poison, is to be questioned; But to the point.

The same Aristotle teaches, and all naturalists and physicians agree, that the difference of the temperament in the two sexes, is, in man hot and dry, in women cold and moist. *Est autem vir calidus et siccus, mulier frigida, humidaque* (Sect. V. Quest. 26.) thus a cold constitution being, in Aristotle's opinion, most favourable to the intellect, and of course, a hot temperament being the reverse, women must naturally surpass men in the use of the intellectual powers.

This

This argument is conclusive to those who acquiesce in Aristotle's *ipse dixit*; but, for my part, I protest it is of no weight with me, for I neither believe that hot countries afford keener wits than the cold, nor that men of a cold constitution are more ingenious than the hot, and much less that those of an adust constitution, border on frenzy, and as to the supposed force of the *Antiperistasis*; it still may remain a doubt. Moisture and siccity, are the other two qualities of the two temperaments. With regard to these, women, according to Aristotle's doctrine, may be concluded more sagacious than men. They who affirm a greater quantity of brain to imply a superiority of understanding, ground themselves

selves on man, the most sensible of all creatures, having more brain in proportion, than all other. Now, first, Aristotle says that man is of a more moist constitution than all other animals. *Homo omnium animantium maximé humidus natura est.* (Sect. V. Quest. 7.) and as from man's having more brains than the brutes, it is inferred, that the greater the brain, the greater share of sense and reason, and from man's being of a moister constitution than the brutes, the inference is that understanding always bears a proportion to moisture, then, the female temperament being more moist than that of man, women must be the more intelligent of the two.

This

This argument, unless by way of retort to those of the opposite side, as little proves the principles in which they jar, being when rightly considered, very uncertain. Who told Pliny of man's having a greater quantity of brains than all other animals? Had he an assistant of such patience, as to lay open the skulls of all kinds of animals, and then weigh the difference of their brains? and how came Aristotle to know that man has more moisture in him than any brute? Shall we suppose this indefatigable philosopher, to have squeezed them all in presses, the better to come at the quantity of moisture? It rather appears that several domestic animals, most insects, and almost all fishes are more moist
than

than man. And were it true that the human brain exceeds that of all others, can it be inferred, that in our species, the greater the brain, the more comprehensive and perspicuous the understanding: for in many other parts of the body, man differs from the brute, yet, the excess of some individuals in those parts, does not seem productive of a distinguishing influence on the mental powers. In order to this, it would be necessary to have observed that, among brutes of the same kind, those who are best furnished with brains, have the best instinct, which I believe not to be the case; as thus in a total want of brain, there would be a total want of perception, which is false, for, according to Pliny, there are many animals, which

which have neither blood nor brain,
and yet have their instinct.

SECTION XIV.

Therefore, laying aside these proofs,
drawn from Aristotle's doctrines, which
are either false or uncertain, and
can only serve women to stop the
mouths of Aristotle's barkers to
whom, it is enough that he has said
so; let us proceed to examine whether
woman's being of a more moist con-
stitution than man, be any detriment
to her understanding. The handle
which they take hold of, who are
for proving the inferiority of wo-
man's intellects from some physical
reason, and it is not without an air of
probability,

probability, is that excess of moisture, either of itself, or by the vapours exhaled from it, may obstruct the course of the animal spirits, clogging up of the fine ducts, through which those minute corpuscles circulate.

This argument however is manifestly false, otherwise it would prove not that the understanding of women is less penetrative and profound, but that their reason is more slow in its operations; whereas many men, readily allow them the advantage in quickness and facility.

Farther, men, otherwise quick-witted, acute, and profound, are subject to constitutional catarrhus fluxions, proceeding from excrementitious humours

mours gathered about the meninges*,
and apparently of the same substance
with the brain, as may be seen in
Riberia, Chap de Catorro. Thus the
excessive moisture of the brain does
not obstruct the ready or right use of
reason, and if the excrementitious has
no such bad effect, much less is it to
be supposed of the natural.

And the natural does not for
Pliny informs us, that the brain of
man is moister than that of any other
animal, *Sed homo portione maximum,
at humidissimum* (Lib. ii. Cap. 37.)
and it is not to be thought that nature
should place in the organ which is the
capital instrument of understanding

* Two thin membranes, which inclose the
substance or marrow of the brain.

and knowledge, such a temperament as must incumber, or disorder reason. If it be said, that notwithstanding this natural moisture in which the brain of man exceeds that of brutes, it still remains, as to the temperament, adapted to the best use of reason, I answer, that allowing moisture of itself to be no impediment, yet, who knows the proportion or quantity of moisture in the brain, requisite for performing the functions for which the organ is destined? And consequently saying, that the proportion is better in man than woman, is saying nothing at all.

Many, however, will object against this moisture, that the inhabitants of moist and foggy countries, are noted for heaviness and stupidity; and that

on

on the contrary, it is in the clear and dry countries, that genius shines in its enchanting radiancy. But be they few or many who speak thus, they talk without book. It is saying, that they have removed the clouds from the horizon, and transferred them into the sphere of the brain; that in rainy countries, the darkness of the atmosphere obscured the soul, and that in those climates which enjoy a serene sky, the superior lustre of the day imparted a greater brilliancy to the understanding. They might, more rationally, say that in the more airy and luminous countries, objects being more visible, they distract the soul more through the inlet of the eyes, and thus render it less fit for speculation and mental exercises; as we per-

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ceive

ceive the thread of thought, and the chain of inferences, to be more coherent in the darkness of the night, than in the resplendency of the day. Let those who account moist countries scarce capable of producing men of any accuteness, turn their eyes a little to the Dutch and the Venetians, who, for knowledge and capacity, are inferior to no nation in Europe, though the former live amidst the waters, and the latter may be said to have stolen part of their territories from the fishes; and even here in Spain, we have before our eyes the Asturians, who, though dwelling in a province the most subject to fogs and rains of any in the whole kingdom, are particularly noted of for accuteness and activity. But where is the wonder of this?

this? Dolphins live in quarters sufficiently moist, being ever in the deep waters, and yet throughout all nature, there are not animals of a more noble instinct, nor which, whether through affection, or imitation of manners, become so familiar with man. For, as may be seen in Gesner, they shew great tenderness towards those from whom they derive their being, when enfeebled by age. They have been seen to guide men in the course of a voyage, and even to pay a regard to their dead, removing them to some secret place, though, at the hazard of being devoured by sea monsters. On the other hand, birds, who mostly live in the clearest air, nearly beyond the verge of vapours, sometimes wafted along by the winds, then settling on the summits

of mountains, should be more sagacious than the beasts of the field.

By the same reason, the Egyptians should be the most ingenious men in the world, the air of that country being as clear as any on the whole globe; scarce such a thing as a cloud is seen in Egypt, from one end of the year to the other, that the soil would produce nothing, were not the want of rain supplied by the overflowing of the river Nile; and though Egypt was venerated for some ages, as the seat of the most refined literature, and mistress of sciences; and though Pythagoras, Homer, Plato, and other great geniusses of Greece, travelled thither to improve in philosophy and mathematics, this is no absolute proof

proof of the superiority of their parts, to those of other nations; no, it only shews the sciences to have, as it were, rambled about on earth, residing sometimes in one place, and sometimes in another. The like may be said of the valley of Lima in our American possessions, where the sky is so clear, that they know nothing of rain, and its fertility is entirely owing to a dew, and a delightful temperature between cold and heat; and yet, the natives are so far from being remarkable for comprehensiveness of understanding, or quickness of discernment, that the Pizarros, who conquered them, found them more easily caught by stratagems, than the Mexicans conquered by Cortez's arms.

I am not ignorant, that the inhabitants of Beotia, were in ancient times, looked upon to be so very dull and blockish, that *Bæoticum ingentum*, & *Bæotica sus*, were nick-names for a stupid man, or woman, and that this defect in their understandings, was attributed to the thick and foggy air of that country, agreeable to what Horace says in one of his epistles. *Bæotum in crasso jurares aëre natum*, you would have sworn him born amidst the foggy air of Beotia. Yet have I some reason to believe, that those ancients have been wanting in justice to Beotia, and mistake the ignorance arising from a want of application for an inherent incapacity. To which reproach, might likewise concur Bæotia's,

tia's confining on Attica, where literature flourished so eminently, that one province, being the theatre of eloquence and wisdom, would make the adjoining appear an uncultivated colony of barbarism. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Bœotia produced some first rate geniuses, as Pindar, the chief of the lyric poets, Plutarch, than whom in the opinion of the illustrious Bacon, antiquity never produced a greater man; not to mention the brave Epaminondas. And I even conceive that in the more remote ages of antiquity, there was a time when the Bœotian's surpassed all their neighbours, and even all other Europeans, in the cultivation of arts and sciences: for Cadmus, who quitting Phœnicia, first introduced the

alphabet into Greece, and was the inventor of writing, settled in Bœotia, where he built the city of Thebes. In Bœotia, likewise was Mount Helicon dedicated to the Muses, who, from thence were named Heliconides, and from this mount, issued the famous fountain of Aganippe, consecrated to the same imaginary goddesses, the water of which, was believed to be to poets as wine, raising them to delightful raptures, and firing their brain with enthusiastic ecstasies. The origin of all these fictions, seems to be that there was a time when poetry was remarkably cultivated in Bœotia, But granting that the Bœotians were naturally dull and heavy, how will it be proved that this proceeded from the moisture of the country, and not from

from other latent causes, especially as we see other moist countries lying under no such reproach; therefore let not moisture any longer labour under the unjust reproach of being incompatible with wit; and be it allowed as a certain truth, that no such argument can afford any satisfactory proof that women are inferior in reason and understanding to men.

SECTION XV.

Father Malebranche argues in another manner, and denies women to be equal in understanding to men by reason of the fibres of their brain being more soft and impressible. I, for my part, know not whether there be
any

any thing in this supposed softness or not. I have read two anatomical treatises which say not a word about it. The female brain having been supposed moister, it has been inferred to be likewise softer; yet, this is no absolute consequence. Ice is moist, and far from being soft; metal in fusion is soft, but cannot be said to be moist. Woman, as of the more soft and pliant temper, has likewise been conjectured to be more soft in the material part of her composition: for some men of superficial knowledge form their ideas, by such analogies; and afterwards, not being duly digested, such reveries spread even among persons of sense.

But

But be it so, what analogy is there between the softness of the brain, and the dubility of reason? Or rather, the brain being thus more impressible by the spirits, one would conceive it better adapted to mental operations, and this argument receives an additional force from our author's doctrine, for in another part, he says that the vestiges, left in the brain by the motion of the animal spirits, being the lines with which the imaginative faculty delineates in it the effigies of objects; the more strongly marked and more distinct; those vestiges and impressions are, the more clearly and sensibly will the understanding perceive the very objects themselves. *Cur igitur imaginatio consistat in sola virtute*

qua

qua mens sibi imagines objectorum efformare potest, eas imprimendo; ut ita loquar, fibris cerebri, certè quo vestigia Spirituum Animalium quæ sunt veluti imaginum illarum lineamenta erunt distinctiora et grandiora, eo fertius et distinctius mens objecta illa imaginabitur.
 Lib. 2. *De Inquirenda Veritate*, Part I.
 Cap. I.

Now it is clear, that the brain being softer and its fibres more flexible, the spirits will more easily impress it, and the vestiges be more strongly marked and distinct. The resistance of the substance being less; and the more distinct, as the fibres in males, being something rigid, make, by their power of elasticity, some

Some effort to recover their former position; and thus, in some measure, face the path made by the motion of the spirits, whereas the fibres of female brains, being more flexible, will form those images larger and distinct, and women of course, will have better perceptions of the objects.

Let it not be thought, that on this account, I am for giving more understanding to women than men, I only take the liberty of animadverting on Father Malebranche and indicating that such an advantage may be inferred from his doctrine, contrary to what he himself asserts in another part of his work; but what I affirm is, that by these philosophical ratiocinations, any thing may be proved,
and

and nothing is really proved. Every one philosophises according to his fancy; and did I write from adulation, humour, or to display my wit, I could easily, by deducting a chain of consequences from received principles, shew that man's understanding, weighed in the balance with female capacity, would be found so light as to kick the beam. But I am far from any such thoughts, all I intend, is to declare my mind, and I therefore aver, that neither Father Malebranche, nor any other writer hitherto, knew the precise mode or specific mechanism, by which the organs of the head assist the faculties of the soul. We know not yet, how fire burns, or water freezes though objects of sense and within the verge of the

the sight and touch; yet would Father Malebranche, with the other Cartesians persuade us, that they have clearly seen into all that passes in the most secret recesses of the rational soul.

Nor can I at all agree with those positions, which reducing the whole to mechanism, make the mind as materially delineating the images of objects in the brain, as the burin on the copper-plate. I am not ignorant of the I may say, unsurmountable difficulties connected with Aristotle's intentional species; but an inference from the premisses is, that all we do on both sides, is no more than touching the hem of nature's outward garment. We all grope in the dark, and none
so

So blind as they who fancy they 'see things in the clearest light, like Harpacta, a female slave of Seneca's, who, even after a total deprivation of sight, would insist it was as strong as ever. It is certain, that they who most please themselves with their extraordinary insight into natural phenomena, are the most exposed to dangerous errors, as he who walks boldly on in a dark place is most in danger of making a false step, whereas he who considering the darkness of the way, treads with circumspection, cannot well receive any great hurt.

But, allowing father Malebranche, and the Carthesian tribe, that the representation of objects is conveyed to the mind by material delineations so formed

formed in the brain by the course of the spirit, it must likewise be allowed, that the brain of women being softer, the images must, from the impressibility of the substance, be more strongly marked, and what is to be inferred from this? Why, father Malebranche's doctrine admits of both inferences, that women have a better understanding than men, and likewise that they have not so good an understanding. The first is implied in the place above cited, and the second, because when he harangues against women, he makes those very lively imaginations proceeding from the more strongly marked delineations to impede the right understanding of the objects. *Cum enim tenuiora objecta ingentes in delicatis cerebri fibris excitent*

L

motus,

*motus, in menta protinus etiam excitant
sensations ita vividas, ut tota occupetur**
Lib. 2. Part 2. Cap. 1.)

But the latter is contrary to all reason, for the larger the images, so far from not giving just representations of the objects, even though these be small, are rather helpful to perception, as corpuscles are best seen through the microscope. And the liveliness of the imagination, not being so excessive as to rise to frenzy, contributes greatly to a right conception of the object.

But

* For small objects exciting great motions in the delicate fibres of the brain, these instantaneously excite such forcible sensations in the mind, that it is intirely taken up with them.

But this greater softness of the brain, in reality, neither implies the one nor the other, neither a superiority nor an inferiority in the female intellects, as the impressions of the spirits, cannot from it be inferred to be larger; and from this largeness, it is that both the contrarieties are deduced, The reason is, the movement or impulse of the spirits may be proportioned to the impressibility of the substance, and thus make no greater impression than that of more rapid spirits on a brain of a stronger texture, as by moderating the action of the hand as superficial a line may be traced on wax, as those which a greater force of the hand would make in lead. After all, what I think of this whole system of female brains is that bodily motions may be less vigorous and forcible

cible in them than men, as the nerves which have their origin in the fibres of the brain, and the spinal marrow must of course be less strong or moved by fainter impulses; but not that the mental operations of women are more or less perfect.

SECTION XVI.

But it is time to strike out of the rugged paths of philosophy into the flowery walks of history, and prove by examples, that female intellects are equally capable of the most abstruse sciences, as those of men; and this is indeed the best way for convincing the generality, all examples weighing more with them than reasons.

sons, which it is not given to all to comprehend. To enumerate every example occuring in history, would be tedious; I shall only cite some of those women, who, in these latter ages, have most distinguished themselves by literature and science, both in our own country, Spain, and the neighbouring kingdoms.

Ann de Cervaton, lady of the bed-chamber to Queen Ferdinand the Catholic's second consort, was celebrated for her learning and parts, even more than for her beauty; for which she was looked upon as absolutely the finest woman of the whole court. In Lucio Mareneo Siculo, are some Latin letters written by the author to that lady, and her answers in the same language.

Isabella de Joya, who flourished in the sixteenth century. It is related of her, that she preached in the cathedral of Barcelona, to the admiration of a crouded audience (I suppose the prelate who allowed of such a novelty, was of opinion that the Apostle's injunction, in the first epistle to the Corinthians against women speaking in church, admits of some exceptions equally with that in the first epistle to Timothy, against their teaching, it being certain from the Acts of the Apostles, that Priscilla, a fellow labourer with the same Apostle, instructed Apollos in the doctrine of the gospel. Afterwards going to Rome, in in the pontificate of Paul III. she solved many knotty points in the books
of

of the subtile Scotus, before the whole college of Cardinals, and highly to their satisfaction. But an honour incomparably greater is, her having in that capital of the universe, brought over a considerable number of Jews to the Catholick religion.

Louisa Sigea, a native of Toledo, but of French extraction, besides her profound acquaintance, both with philosophy, and philology, was remarkable for her knowledge in languages, being such a mistress of the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic and Syriac, that she wrote to Pope Paul III. a letter in each of those five languages. Her father Diego Sigeo, being afterwards called to the court of Lisbon, to be preceptor to the duke of Bra-

ganza. The Infanta, King Emannel's daughter, having a great taste for literature, would have the learned Louisa about her person; and recommended her to a very honourable and very advantageous marriage.

Oliva Sabuco de Nantes, born at Alearaz, had a most sublime and extensive genius, which shines forth in her writings, on physical, medical, moral, and political subjects. But what she derives her greatest lustre from, was her new phisiological and medical system; in which, contrary to all the ancients, she maintains that it is not the blood which nourishes our bodies, but that white juice, which issuing from the brain, pervades all the nerves; and to distempers in
this

this vital lymph, she attributes most diseases and complaints. This system, which was neglected in Spain, raised the admiration and enflamed the curiosity of England, that now foreigners assume the honour of it, though in reality, due to a Spanish lady. And here I cannot but lament the unhappy, I was going to call it perverse, temper of my countrymen; who, that they may like the production of their own country, it must be made up and sold to them by foreigners. It farther appears, that this eminent woman, was prior to the celebrated des Cartes in the opinion that the rational soul resided in the brain, but extending it to the whole substance, and not like des Cartez, confining it to the pineal gland. Donna Oliva,
was

was so confident of her ability to defend her opinions however singular, that in the dedication of one of her works to the president of Castille, she requests that an assembly of the most learned naturalists and physicians might be convened, offering to shew beyond denial, that the natural philosophy and physic, then taught in the schools, were wide of the mark. She flourished in the time of Philip II.

Bernarda Ferreyra, besides her acquaintance with several languages, and the harmony of her poetry, was very well versed in rhetoric, philosophy, and mathematics. Her works are chiefly poetical; and our celebrated Lopez de Vega, as a testimony of his regard to the merit of this extraordinary

nary lady, dedicated to her, that beautiful elegy, intitled *Phillis*.

Juana Morella, a native of Barcelona, was a prodigy of erudition. Her father being obliged to quit Spain for a homicide, fled to Lions in France, where the genius of this singular child emitting some scintillations of its future replendency, nothing was spared in giving her a suitable education; and she made such rapid progresses in the career of literature, that at the age of twelve years, (which was the year 1607) she publicly maintained Theses in philosophy, and dedicated them to Margaret of Austria, Queen of Spain. Guy Patin, and he lived at that time, says, that in her eighteenth year, she held
a public

a public disputation in the Jesuit's college at Lions. She had a profound knowledge of philosophy, divinity, music, and jurisprudence, besides speaking fourteen languages; till at length, tired with the comparative vanity of all human excellencies, she entered into the convent of St. Praxedis at Avignon.

The famous Mexico nun, sister Juana Ines de la Cruz is universally known for the sublimity, force, and erudition of her poems, that any encomium of her would be superfluous. I shall only say, that her lowest talent was that of poetry, though it be what has most raised her fame. Many Spanish poets greatly surpass her in harmony, but, perhaps not one equals her

her in variety and extent of knowledge. She was natural, but something deficient in energy. Her criticism on father Vieyra's sermons, shews the poignancy of her wit; but it must be allowed not to come up to that of the matchless Jesuit, whom she attacks; and is it any thing strange that a woman should be inferior to that man, whom no preacher has hitherto equalled for sublimity of thought, solidity of argument, and a perspicuous force of expression?

SECTION XVII.

France has produced many learned ladies, they having a greater opportunity for studying, and, I believe, likewise,

likewise, greater liberty than with us. Having confined myself to the most celebrated of my own countrywomen, I flatter myself, the French ladies will excuse my observing the like brevity with regard to them.

Suzan de Habert, wife to Charles de Jardin, an officer of the household to king Henry III. understood philosophy and divinity; was very well acquainted with the doctrines of the primitive fathers, and had acquired no superficial knowledge of the Spanish, Italian, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages. But her real glory consisted more in her sanctity of manners and devotion than in all the vast compass of her learning.

Mary

Mary de Gourney, a native of Paris, and of an illustrious family. The learned Dominick Baudius, used to call her the *French Syren*. Her genius and literature were so celebrated, that there was scarce a great man who did not think it an honour to correspond with her; in her cabinet, were found letters from the Cardinals de Richlieu, Bentivoglio, Perron, St. Francis de Sales, from the duke of Mantua, Erycius Puteanus, Justus Lipsius, Balzac, Maynard, Heinsius, Cæzar Capacio, Carlos Pinto, and many other of the most eminent literati of that age.

Magdalene Scuderi, very justly called the *Sappha of her age*, as undoubtedly

edly equal to that celebrated Grecian poetess for the beauty of her compositions; and for purity of manners and virtue, they are not to be named on the same day. She made her genius always subservient to excellent purposes. Her Artamenesor, Cyrus the Great, and Clelia; which, after the manner of Barclay's Argenis, conceal under the veil of novels, many important pieces of real history, are exquisite compositions, and, in my opinion, beyond any thing of the kind, written either in France or any other nation, Argenis alone excepted. The sublimity and justness of the thoughts; the natural connection of the fable; the pathos and force of the arguments, the liveliness of the descriptions, and the easy purity, majesty, and energy
of

of the stile, form an admirable whole; and, as a still greater embellishment, the love parts are conducted with the utmost decency; the moral virtues exhibited in the most engaging beauty, and the heroic shine in the most resplendent brilliancy. Such was the regard paid to the astonishing literature of madam Scuderi, that all the academies, which admitted persons of her sex, honoured her with an invitation to become a member. In the year 1671, she gained the French academy's prize of eloquence, which was equal to a formal declaration of that illustrious body, that she exceeded all France in eloquence. Lewis XIV. who was never wanting to recompence merit, settled on her a pension of 200 livres per year, and Cardinal Mazarin,

rin, had, long before, bountifully remembered her in his will; another pension she enjoyed from the liberality of that excellent person Lewis de Boncherat, who so worthily filled the high office of Chancellor of France, that after a very useful and irreproachable life, she died full of years and glory in 1701*.

Antionette

* Mr. De Saint-Foix, in his history of the order of the holy Ghost says of lady Retz, spouse to the Duke de Retz, a knight of that order: Her wit and taste for the sciences, were not less celebrated than her beauty. It was she who as linguist to Catherine de Medicis, answered the ambassadors of Poland, who brought the Duke of Anjon the instrument of his election to that crown. *What a scandal, what a wretched age!* cries a man of letters on this occasion; *so little acquainted with the Latin were the French noblemen,*

Antionette de la Guardie, a French lady, whose mind and body were so suitable, that it was said of her, nature had taken pleasure to blend all the graces of the mind and body in one woman. She so far distinguished herself in poetry, that at a time when that art was highly esteemed, and consequently much cultivated in France, all that large and populous kingdom could not afford a man able so much as to rival her. She paid the debt of nature in the year 1694, leaving a daughter who inherited all her genius;

M 2 of
noblemen, that not one was able to converse with those ambassadors, during that long journey. I believe, adds Mr. de Saint Foix, that it would be the same in our days; and I do not really see where the great hurt of it lies.

of which there could not be a more decisive proof, than her gaining the French academy's prize of poetry.

Lady Mary Magdalene Gabriel de Montemart, daughter to the Duke de Montemart, and a benedictine nun, was born with every disposition requisite to the most abstract and sublime sciences, having a most happy memory with equal penetration and judgment. In her childhood, she made herself mistress of the Spanish, Italian, and Greek; at the age of 15, being presented to Maria Theresa, of Austria, on that Princess's arrival at Paris, she was admired by the whole court for her fluency and eloquence in speaking Spanish. She was intimately acquainted, both with the an-
tient

tient and modern philosophy, scholastic, dogmatic, expositive and mystic divinity. She signalized herself by some translations highly celebrated, particularly, that of the first book of the Iliad; and employed her pen on morality, criticism, and natural philosophy. Her letters were esteemed such a treasure, that even Lewis XIV. himself always expressed great pleasure at receiving any: the productions of her muse were admirable but not many; and those after reading them once, she used to commit to the flames; a sacrifice which her humility made of many other of her works, and would have made of all, had she consulted only her own sentiments. She was no less eminent for devotion and her capacity for government equalled

her erudition. In regard to such a constellation of endowments, she was chosen Abbess General of the congregation of Fontevrard, of the order of St. Benedict, in which is this singularity, that though composed of a great number of monasteries of both sexes divided into four provinces, all are under the jurisdiction of the Abbey of Fontevrard, a magnificent monastery, and no less famous for the noble birth than the sanctity of its members, counting no less than fourteen Princesses among its Abbesses, and of these five of the house of Bourbon. This lady discharged that high post with universal applause, and to the great edification and increase of her congregation.

Mary

Mary Jacqueline de Blemur, a benedictine nun, who, says the very learned father Mabillon, *en los Estud. Monastic Bibliot. ecclesiast.* Sect. XII. composed the *Benedictine year*, in seven quarto volumes, and likewise the lives of illustrious persons of that order, in two volumes quarto.

Ann le Fevre, commonly known by the name of madam Dacier, was daughter to the very learned Tanaquil le Fevre, whom however she equalled in erudition, and surpassed in eloquence and beauty of stile in her native language. Her capacity chiefly displayed itself in criticism, that at least, relatively to prophane authors, there was not a man in her

time either in France or out of it, who did not refer to her judgment. She translated several Greek authors, with the addition of valuable notes. Her passion for Homer drew her into several controversies, though these only served to show her literature, judgment, and wit, to greater advantage: particularly, she asserted the superiority of the Greek poet to Virgil, against some critics who had openly endeavoured to bring him into disrepute, as Monsieur de la Mothe of the French academy: and though some sticklers for the Latin poet sided with the academican, they could not deny his authority to be but of little weight as unacquainted with the Greek tongue in which Homer wrote; whereas his learned antagonist understood it

as

as well as any person living; and an impartial judge will farther consider, that it is only a few Latin authors and not so much as one Greek, who place Virgil above or on a level with Homer; when all the Greeks and many of the Latins declare in favour of the latter. Velleius Paterculus, that charming historian, gives him this high encomium, *as he had nobody before him to imitate, so neither has any one appeared able to imitate him.* Madam Dacier died 1720, and in the seventy-sixth year of her age.

SECTION. XVIII.

Italy rivals France in learned women, but for the same reason that we
reduce

reduce the French to a small number, we shall observe the like conciseness towards the Italians.

Dorothea Bucca, a native of Bologna, having from her infancy been destined for literature, made such progresses in it, that the university conferred on her a distinction, till then unprecedented, creating her a doctor; and accordingly, for many years, she held lectures which were greatly frequented. She flourished in the 15th century.

Ifotta Nogarola, born at Verona, was the oracle of her age; for besides her profound knowledge in philosophy and divinity, and the works of the fathers, she was mistress of several languages,

languages, and part of her character is, that for eloquence, she was not inferior to the greatest orators of the time; and one no common proof of her elocution is, that she several times harangued the Popes Nicholas V. and Pius II. and made a most elaborate speech at the council of Mantua, which the latter had convened, that all the Christian Princes might enter into a league against the Turks. Some of Isotta's works coming to the sight of Cardinal Bessarion, that illustrious patron of literature was so taken with her genius, that he made a journey from Rome to Verona, purely to pay her a visit. This lady departed in the 38th year of her age, in the year 1466, verifying the Latin verse

Immodicis

Immodicis brevis est ætas et rara senectus.

Which may be englisht,

Extremes are seldom lasting.

Laura Cereti, a native of Bressia, publicly taught philosophy in that city, with general applause, at the giddy age of 18 years: She flourished in the 16th century.

Cassandra Fideli, was born at Venice, and so celebrated for her knowledge of the Greek tongue, philosophy, divinity, and history, that there was scarce a prince of note in that age, who did not send her valuable tokens of his esteem; and among Cassandra's admirers, Pope Julius II. and Leo X.

Lewis

Lewis XI, of France, and their Catholic Majesties King Ferdinand, and his Consort Isabella, particularly distinguished themselves. After a life of great usefulness, having been the author of several excellent pieces she died in the 102^d. year of her age, 1567; a signal exception to the above-mentioned aphorism.

Catherine de Cibo, Duchess of Camerino, in the Marquisate of Ancona, had a very uncommon knowledge of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; and in philosophy and divinity, she was an adept, but the lustre of her erudition, was farther enhanced by her sublime piety. The first convent of Capuchins, was of her building. She died in the year 1557.

Martha

Martha Marchina, a Neapolitan, with a genius so far superior to her mean birth, that amidst all the embarrassments of trade and labour, she early made herself mistress of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and distinguished herself by several ingenious poems. Such endowments, however, did not raise her from that low sphere in which she had been born: for, removing to Rome, with a prospect of a more easy situation, having received many assurances of affluence and independency, it is known that she laboured hard to support her family by making soap. Had a spirit of that cast enjoyed leisure, and the other advantages necessary to a studious disposition, she would undoubtedly have proved

proved a prodigy of learning, and have received the same honours as some academies have been pleased to confer on her sex. She died at the age of 46 years, in 1646.

Lucretia Helena Cornaro, an additional ornament to that illustrious family. If she brings up the rear in this list of Italian learned ladies, as the most modern, yet in dignity, we may say, without the least injustice to any one, that the precedence is due to her. This lady, the honour of her sex, was born in the year 1646. A strong propensity to learning declared itself even in her infancy, and her progresses were answerable to such early commencements: for after acquiring a grammatical knowledge of
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the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, she made herself mistress of the European living languages. In philosophy, mathematics, and divinity, she so eminently distinguished herself, that the university of Padua unanimously resolved to make her Doctor of Divinity, and it would certainly have taken place, if not opposed by Cardinal Barbarigo Bishop of the city, from a respectful deference to St. Paul's direction, that women are not to teach in the church; therefore not to violate that canonical rule, neither be wanting in regard due to Helena's extraordinary merit, she was created Doctor of philosophy, many Princes and Princesses, coming from various parts of Italy, to grace the ceremony. Such an assemblage of science and literature, could
 only

only be surpassed, as it was by her singular piety. At the age of twelve years, she made the vow of virginity, and the addresses of a considerable German prince, who, even offered to obtain his holiness's dispensation, and the entreaties of her parents, could make no impression on her firmness; that to quench at once the hopes of many other importunate suitors, she determined to enter into a Benedictine nunnery; but being hindered by her father, she went as far as she could, renewing before the Abbot of the monastery of St. George, her vow of virginity and other religious vows, as an oblate of the order of St. Benedict. This devout sacrifice of her liberty was followed by so exemplary a life within her father's

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house,

house, as would have been admired in a convent. Such was her love of retirement, and such her reluctance against appearing in public, that, though in compliance with her father's repeated commands, she did sometimes come into company, it affected her so, that she used to say *this obedience will be the death of me*. And indeed, her mundane life was but short, passing to a better state in her thirtieth year, welcomed by angels, and lamented by mortals; leaving behind her many works, as precious monuments of her piety and learning. Several authors have composed formal penegyrics on this extraordinary woman, particularly Gregorio Leti in his *Raguallos Historicos*, or a *Historical Collections*, in which he terms her a

Heroine

*Heroine of Literature, Prodigy of Science,
an Angel in Beauty and Purity. **

SECTION XIX.

Germany, amidst all its dreary frosts and snows, presents us with a woman, shining in the warmest irradiations of genius, the fine arts and erudition.

N 2

This

A learned Italian lady of our own times, is Signora Anglese, daughter to a creditable tradesman in Milan, famed, throughout all Europe, for her knowledge of the scholastic languages and a profound treatise on Analysis, which, besides elogiums transmitted to her from all scientific societies has gained her a professorship of mathematics in the university of Bologna. Her studies, her successes, nor the in-

treaties

This was the famous Anna Maria Schurman, the glory of upper and lower Germany, being born at Cologne, and by descent a Fleming: a more general capacity has never been seen in either sex; her comprehensive mind embracing all arts and sciences; every difficulty in them yielded to her penetration. In her sixth year

treaties of her father, have not been able to extinguish the call which she conceives to have felt in her childhood, to enter among the *Blue Girls*: than which there are few orders more austere. Since her father's death, she has given herself up to the most sublime devotion; and has sacrificed to christian self denial, all those enjoyments to which her fine qualities and literary acquirements had already made her way, among the better part of mankind. *Observations sur l'Italie, &c.*

year she could cut most delicate figures in paper, without any teacher or pattern; at eight, she, in a few days, learned to draw and colour flowers in a masterly manner; in her tenth year, only three hours practice brought her to an admirable delicacy in embroidery; but her talents for more exalted employments lay hidden till, in her thirteenth year they declared themselves on this occasion. As her brothers used to learn their lessons at home, it was observed that in their repeating them when they were at a loss or said wrong, Anna Maria used to put them right; though, while they were conning their lessons, she seemed wholly taken up with her needle. This sign, together with others which she frequently gave of her disposition and

capacity, determined her father to let her proceed in the career of literature at her own pleasure. Accordingly it was with astonishing rapidity and no less accuracy that Miss Schurman ranged the vast expanse of sacred and prophane learning, attaining at length to the possession of almost every human science, together with divinity and a reflective knowledge of the scriptures, scarce ever paralleled. She was perfectly acquainted with the German, Dutch, English, French, Italian, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldean, Arabic, and the Ethiopian languages; and her poetical genius has left several monuments still much esteemed. She excelled in the liberal arts no less than in the sciences and languages. Besides her skill in touching

touching several instruments; she had a scientific knowledge of music. She likewise handled the pencil, chizel and burin with great delicacy. It is said that in a waxen image of herself, and of her own making, some pearls appeared so natural, that they were not imagined to be wax, till she pricked them with a needle. Her letters were very much esteemed, not only for the elegance of the stile, but likewise for the inimitable beauty of the hand, that any little piece of her writing was laid up in museums as a most valuable curiosity. There was scarce a personage of note in her time who did not send her tokens of his esteem, and, at the same time, desired her correspondence as a favour. Louisa Maria Gonzaga, Queen of

N 4

Poland

Poland, in her journey to that kingdom, condescended to pay Miss Schurman a visit at her own house. She declined marriage; though many very advantageous matches were offered her, especially M. Catoe, pensionary of Holland and likewise an excellent poet, who composed some very polite verses in praise of his charmer when she was only fourteen years of age. This incomparable woman, who deserved immortality, if immortality on earth be desirable, died in the year 1678, in the seventy-first year of her age.

SECTION XX.

Omitting many other learned women, who have done honour to their
several

several countries, I shall conclude with a late instance from Asia, as one evidence among many, that female abilities are not confined to Europe alone,

This shall be of the beautiful, learned, and virtuous *Sitti*.* Maani, spouse to the famous traveller Peter de la Valle. Maani was born in Mesopotamia, thus that happy province within which, some expositors place paradise had the honour of producing two Rachels; it being certain that Haran where Jacob's beloved wife received her birth, was a place in Mesopotamia. Being early distinguished

* A title among the Persians, equal to that of *Lady*.

distinguished not less for her sublime genius, and lively understanding, than a beautiful person, such a character raised in Mr. de la Valle a desire of seeing this admirable young lady. Her conversation improved his curiosity into love and an earnest pursuit of passing through life with her in the most tender connection. Maani, now Mrs. la Valle, won by the affectionate entreaties, and the solid reasonings of her husband, exchanged the Chaldean worship for that of Rome, and prevailed with her parents to join in her conversion. The literary progress made by this amiable Asiatic in a few years, (for like a flower she was blasted in her bloom) are incredible, making herself mistress, not only of what learning was within the verge of those countries,

countries, but farther came to understand twelve different languages. Her virtues excelled her literary acquisitions; and among those, her valour, as most foreign from her sex, shone with distinguished lustre, having with sword and pistol bravely seconded her husband in two or three defensive encounters. This lady so singular for her beauty, her accomplishments, her virtues, and travels, was taken off near Ormus, in the twenty-third year of her age, by a fever, truly malignant. Thus to the grief of all who knew her, died the modern Rachel, so nearly resembling the ancient, as if nature and fortune had industriously formed the resemblance. Both natives of Mesopotamia, both of admirable beauty, both married to foreigners and persons of
 20 great

great merit, both exchanging the worship of their country for that of their husbands, both spending part of life in peregrinations with their husbands, and at length both died in the flower of their age, and on a journey. But in their obsequies the consort of one seems very different from that of the other, Mr. de la Valle, in regard and elegance much surpassing the patriarch Jacob. The latter buried his Rachel on the same road where she died, which apparently speaks a want of due regard; but the constant affection of the patriarch must incline us to suppose that it was not without some powerful reason either mystic or natural; besides he carefully recommended Rachel's corpse to Joseph, acquainting him with the place
of

of its interment Mr. la Valle discharged his last duty with very singular circumstances: for after embalming the body of his adored Maani in the most costly manner, and laying it in a very magnificent coffin, he carried it with him in his travels over Asia and other parts, for four years successively, till his arrival at Rome, there he deposited those precious remains in his family vault, in the church of Santa Maria de *Ara Cæli*, and with all the splendor and solemnity consistent with the ceremony; Mr. de la Valle himself pronouncing the funeral oration till excess of grief actually stopping his voice, his eyes poured forth the peroration in floods of tears.

SECTION

SECTION XXI.

In this catalogue of learned women, all those of antiquity are omitted, as occurring in various books; and many of the modern, to avoid prolixity. It is sufficient to know, and indeed it seems the principal point, that the generality of women, applying themselves to literature or the sciences, have excelled; whereas among men of studious professions, scarce three or four out of a hundred, turn out real scholars.

But lest women should from this reflection, take occasion to conceit themselves even of a superior capacity to men, they must be told as a check
to

to such presumption, that such inequality in literary progresses, is owing to this; that those women only, in whom either they who have the care of their education, or they themselves perceive a particular disposition and aptitude for scientific attainments, are put to a formal course of study; whereas in men no such choice is made, their fathers, without minding either their capacity, or incapacity, send them to school, then to the university, as possibly being their most ready way of providing for their sons, or even make their fortune: And the generality of men, not being of very bright and comprehensive parts, their progresses in learning must necessarily make no great figure.

Father

Father Fejoo having for reasons best known to himself thought fit to pass over the females of these islands, I take the liberty of inserting three or four, in commemoration of a few out of many, after the example of my original.

Constantia Grierson, one of the most extraordinary women that this or any other age has produced, was born in the county of Kilkenny, in Ireland, (Mrs. Barber's preface to her poems) She died in the the year 1733, at the age of twenty-seven, and was allowed long before to be an excellent scholar, not only in Greek and Roman literature, but in history, divinity, philosophy,

phy, and mathematics. She gave a proof of her knowledge, in the Latin tongue, by her dedication of the Dublin edition of Tacitus to the Lord Carteret; and by that of Terence, to his son, to whom she likewise wrote a Greek epigram. She composed several fine poems in English, several of which are inserted by Mrs. Barber among her own. When the Lord Carteret was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he obtained a patent for Mr. Grierson, her husband, to be the King's printer, and to distinguish and reward her uncommon merit, had her life inserted in it. Besides her parts and learning, she was also a woman of great virtue and piety. Mrs. Pilkington has recorded some particulars of Mrs. Grierson, and tells us, that “ when about
O “ eighteen

“ eighteen years of age, she was
 “ brought to her father to be instruc-
 “ ted in midwifry ; that she was mis-
 “ tress of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and
 “ French, and understood the mathe-
 “ matics as well as most men : and
 “ what, says Mrs. Pilkington, made
 “ these extraordinary talents yet more
 “ surprizing was, that her parents
 “ were poor illiterate country people ;
 “ so that her learning appeared like
 “ the gift poured out on the apostles,
 “ of speaking all languages without
 “ the pains of study.”

Lady Jane Grey was of the blood-
 royal of England by both parents.
 Her father, the Duke of Suffolk, hav-
 ing himself a tincture of letters, em-
 ployed his two chaplains as tutors to
 his

his daughter, and under their instructions she made such a proficiency as amazed them. Her own language she spoke and wrote with peculiar accuracy. The French, Italian, Latin, and especially Greek, were as natural to her as her own. She not only understood them perfectly, but spoke and wrote them with the greatest facility and terseness. She was versed likewise in Hebrew, Chaldee, and Arabic, and all this while a mere child. She had also a sedateness of temper, a quickness of apprehension, and a solidity of judgment that enabled her not only to become the mistress of languages, but of sciences, so that she thought, spoke, and reasoned upon subjects of the greatest importance, in a manner that surprized even those, who from

their own abilities were not much inclined to esteem what the rest of the world would have thought very extraordinary. With these high endowments she had so much mildness, humility, and modesty, that she set no value at all upon those acquisitions. She was naturally fond of literature, and that fondness was much heightened as well by the severity of her parents, in the feminine part of her education, as by the gentleness of her tutor, Aylmer, in this: when mortified and confounded by the unmerited chiding of the former, she returned with double pleasure to the lessons of the latter, and sought in Demosthenes and Plato, who were her favourite authors, that delight that was denied her in all the other scenes of life, in which she

she mingled but little, and seldom with any satisfaction.

When the famous Roger Ascham called on a visit to the family in August, all the rest of the sex being out a-hunting in the park, he went to wait upon Lady Jane in her apartment, found her reading Plato's Phædon. Astonished at it, presently after the first compliments were past, he asked her why she should lose such pastime as there needs must be in the park; at which she answered, smiling "I wist all their sport in the park is
 " but a shadow to that pleasure I find
 " in Plato. Alas! good folk, they
 " never knew what true pleasure
 " meant." This naturally leading him to enquire how a lady of her age, for

she could not then be above fourteen
 at most, had attained to such a depth
 of pleasure both in the Platonic lan-
 guage and philosophy, she made the
 following very remarkable reply : “ I
 “ will tell you, and I will tell you a
 “ truth which perchance you may
 “ marvel at. One of the greatest be-
 “ nefits which ever God gave me, is
 “ that he sent me so sharp and severe
 “ parents, and so gentle a school-
 “ master. For when I am in presence
 “ either of father or mother, whether
 “ I speak, keep silence, sit, stand, or
 “ go, eat, drink, be merry, or sad, be
 “ sewing, playing, dancing, or doing
 “ any thing else, I am so sharply taun-
 “ ted, so cruelly threatened, yea pre-
 “ sently sometimes with pinches, rips,
 “ and bobs, and other ways, which I
 “ shall

“ shall not name for the honour I bear
 “ them, so without measure misfor-
 “ dered, that I think myself in hell,
 “ till time come that I must go to Mr.
 “ Aylmer; who teacheth me so gently,
 “ so pleasantly, with such fair allure-
 “ ments to learning, that I think all
 “ the time nothing while I am with
 “ him; and when I am called from
 “ him, I fall on weeping, because
 “ whatsoever I do else but learning, is
 “ full of grief, trouble, fear, and
 “ wholly misliking unto me. And
 “ thus my book hath been so much
 “ my pleasure, and bringeth daily to
 “ me more pleasure and more, that in
 “ respect of it all other pleasures in
 “ very deed be but trifles and troubles
 “ unto me.” What reader is not
 melted with this speech? What scholar

does not envy Afcham's felicity at this interview? He was indeed very deeply affected with it, and to that impression we owe the discovery of some further anecdotes concerning this lovely scholar.

Lady Jane's character receives a great lustre from her moral and political life, that, take her for all in all, impartiality will rank her with any female worthy produced by the author; but in conformity to his succinctness, shall avoid dwelling on farther particulars, and only mention the respectable names of the Countesses of Derby and Winchelsea, Carter, Rowe, Read, and the patriotic Mrs. Maccauley, at this present time writing a
History

History of England, in the style of a
Lyttelton, and the spirit of a Sidney.

My opinion therefore is against all declamation about an inequality in the capacities of either sex; but if women, to recriminate on those impertinent despisers of their genius for the arts and sciences, are for throwing by the defensive, and take upon them to act the offensive part, and entertain themselves with disputing matters against men, they may use the arguments set forth in the preceeding part of this discourse where we evince that the same physical maxims with which it is pretended to depreciate the capacity of women, rather make in favour of their understanding, as superior to ours.

To

To which we shall add the authority of Aristotle himself, who, in several places teaches that, in all kinds of animals, expressly including the human species, the females are more cunning and ingenious than the males, particularly in his ninth book of the history of animals, Chap. I. where he pronounces the following sentence: *In omnibus vero, quorum procreatio est, fœminam, & marem simili fere modo natura distinxit moribus, quibus mas differt à fœmina: quod præcipue tum in homine, tum etiam in iis, quæ magnitudine præsent, & quadrupedes viviparæ sint, percipitur: sunt enim fœminæ moribus mollioribus, mitescunt celerius, & malum facilius patiuntur: discunt-etiam, imitanturque ingeniosius.* Nature has
in

in all species especially the human and viviporous quadrupeds, distinguished the male and female by particular qualities: the females being of a softer disposition, and more patient and placable they likewise take a thing sooner and are more ready at imitation.

Aristotle's authority thus giving to woman a delicacy and softness of temper, and likewise a genius superior to that of men, may have great weight with those who carry their veneration of that philosopher so far as to stile him the all *penetrative genius of nature*, and the apex of human capacity. But I must advise my fair clients, not to build too much upon Aristotle; for at the heels of the above compliment

ment to their mind is the following
censure on their heart.

Verum malitiosiores, astutiores fœminæ sunt, i. e. but the females are much more spiteful, wiley and treacherous; and, though a little after he prefers them to men in that amiable attribute of compassion, he, in the very same sentence brands them with envy, slander, and rancour; that I question whether the women will agree to the philosopher's giving them the superiority in understanding, accompanied with such ugly predicaments. It may, however, be reasonably inferred that, if he who had so bad an opinion of their morals, allows them to be more understanding and ingenious, it could not be without manifest reason.

S E C T.

SECTION XXII.

Here it will be proper to say something of the aptitude of woman for the politer arts and civil occupations of a higher nature than those in which they are commonly employed, as painting and sculpture. If the women who have dedicated themselves to these arts are not in any great number; those few have afforded some excellent artists. Mention has already been made of the admirable Anna Maria Schurman, so celebrated for her skill in painting sculpture, and engraving.

Italy, as the peculiar residence of the fine arts, has, among other celebrated female painters, produced three sisters, *Sophonisba*, *Lucia*, and *Europa de Angosciola*,

Sciola, the first of whom received an invitation from the consort of Philip II. to come to her court in quality of her painter; and such was her reputation that Pope Pious IV. desired a potrait of that excellent Queen, by *Sophonisba*, as the only pencil of that time, worthy to draw a princess of her eminent endowments.

Irene de Spilimberg a Venetian, so far excelled in the same art, that her pictures were frequently mistaken for those of Titian whose cotemporary she was. Fate hastily snatched her from life in her twenty sixth year, her very competitor generously honouring her death with his tears.

But

Teresa de Po, is at present, if still living, in high esteem at Naples for her painting; and many valuable pieces of her's are to be seen in the Marchioness de Villena's apartment, who continually employed her, and as generously rewarded her during her residence at Naples, whilst the Marquis was Viceroy. Some Italian women have even distinguished themselves in statuary. Propertia de Rossi gained great reputation by the beauty of her designs, and delicate execution in marble statues; but she herself, and even all others were surpassed by the inimitable Labinia Fontana.

France, as far as comes within my knowledge, has only one female painter to boast; but of a merit equal to any praise, this was Isabella Sophia
de

de Cheron, more known by the name of Madam le Hai who, besides her genius for poetry and music, was so celebrated for painting, that the Dauphin, son to Lewis the Great, employed her to paint him and his sons. The same mark of esteem she received from Casimir V. King of Poland, who, after his voluntary abdication of that crown, resided at Paris; likewise from many of the first nobility in France, who condescended to go and set for their pictures at Isabella's house and the prince of Condè himself paid her many visits. The Emperor Joseph offered her a considerable pension if she would remove to Vienna; and not prevailing, he sent her models of his face, and those of all the Imperial family. Besides her accuracy in design and

and propriety of colouring, she had a wonderful facility joining chearfully in any conversation without the least interruption to her pencil. But what crowned her life was her piety and nobleness of mind. These, to the sensible world, rendered her more esteemable than all the exquisite performances of her hand. Accordingly her death, which happened in the year 1711, was as triumphant as her life had been exemplary.

But the equality of the women to men, in disposition and aptitude for the fine and noble arts, no where shews itself more than in music; they who apply themselves to that charming art, making equal progresses for the time, as any of our sex; and the mas-

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ters

ters find no more difficulty in bringing girls forward than boys. I myself knew a female musician, who, before she had reached her sixteenth year, was accounted a very pretty composer. It was designedly, that in the groupe of so many women justly celebrated, I have omitted the accomplishments and qualities of our illustrious Queen Isabella Farnese; both because my respect for her Majesty would not allow me to touch on so sacred a subject with so coarse a pen; and because another, much more adequate to the sublime subject, has already given the world some glimpses of the radiancies beaming from that illustrious personage.

S E C T.

SECTION XXIII.

Some imagine all the premises to be at once overthrown by this single reply: if women are equal to men in understanding and an aptitude for sciences, and political and domestic government, how comes it that God invested man with the dominion and superiority over woman; which he plainly does by this decree in the third Chapter of Genesis: *Sub viri potestate eris: thou shalt be under the power of thy husband*, as unquestionably the God of infinite wisdom would confer the government on that sex whom he had created most capable of such a charge.

I answer, first, the precise sense of that text cannot be certainly known, by reason of the difference of the versions. The septuagint read: *Ad virum conversio tua*. Aquila: *ad virum societas tua*. Simmachus: *ad virum appetitus, vel impetus tuus*, *Thy desire shall be to thy husband*. And according to the very learned Benedict Pereyra, the plain sense of the original Hebrew, rendered word for word, is; *Ad virum desiderium, vel concupiscentia tua*. *To man, as thy husband, shall be thy desire, or concupiscentie*.

Secondly, the domestic subjection of women may be affirmed to have been merely a penalty for the breach of God's injunction, and thus would
not

not have taken place in the state of innocence, at least, the text says nothing to the contrary: or rather, had woman been originally subject to man in the state of innocence, the all-wise and gracious Creator of both would not have omitted making this subordination known at the formation of Eve. Thus it was not on account of any superior understanding in man that such authority was conferred on him, but because woman had led the way in the transgression.

Thirdly, even had God originally invested man with an authoritative superiority over women, that does not absolutely conclude for man's intellectual superiority: the reason is, that though both be equal in talents and

P 3 understanding,

understanding, the decorum and tranquillity of the house and family required subordination, as otherwise it would have frequently been a scene of clamour and confusion. All moral philosophers, conformably to Aristotle, agree, that of all the several governments, the most defective, the most subject to convulsions, is that called Democracy, in which every individual of the republic share in the political power; and between husband and wife, such a domestic government would be not only productive of endless confusion, but really impracticable; for, on a difference of opinions among a people, the affair in question may be decided by a majority of votes, whereas no such thing can take place between husband and wife, being only one to
 one

one; and thus, on a disagreement, matters cannot be made up, the business of the family must be at a stand, unless set in motion by a proper exertion of superiority. But why, allowing a necessity for one being superior though their faculties for government are equal, did God confer that superiority on man? Many reasons may be alledged from his superiority in other qualities, as steadiness and courage, and thus better qualified to form proper resolutions, and carry them into execution. But much better is it to say, that in the divine dispensations the motives generally lie without our verge.

SECTION XXIV.

I shall conclude this discourse with an exception, which may be raised against the whole tenor of it; which is, to promote a persuasion, that both sexes are equal in intellectual qualities, is so far from being of any public advantage, that it may rather occasion many mischiefs, as fomenting the pride and presumption of women,

This difficulty may be removed only by saying, that in every thing, which comes under the cognizance of reason, it is of use to display truth, and explode error. A true knowledge of things is valuable in itself, without regard to any other end.

Truth

Truth has an intrinsical worth, and of such coin the whole treasure of the understanding consists. Some pieces indeed are more valuable than others, but not one is useless. Neither can the truth which we have proved, of itself elevate women to vanity and presumption. If they be really our equals in mental faculties and in virtue, there is not the least harm in their knowing it and thinking so. St. Thomas, speaking of vain glory says, *that for any one to know and feel a complacency in any good or perfection of which he is possessed, is no sin. Quod autem aliquis bonum suum cognoscat, et approbet, non est peccatum.* (Sect. 2. 2. Quæst. 132. Art. 1.) and in another part, speaking of presumption, he says, that this fault always arises from some

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error in the understanding; therefore, as women's knowing what they are does not lead them to entertain any overweening conceits of their accomplishments, it cannot puff them up with vain-glory or presumption; or rather, the rectitude of mind, which it is the scope of this discourse to establish by removing a vulgar error, adds no presumption to women, and abates it in men.

But I claim a still greater merit; the maxim which we have corroborated, so far from tending to any moral evil, may bring about much good. Let it be considered how many men this imaginary superiority of talents has prompted to undertake criminal conquests on the other sex. In all disputes,

disputes, a confidence or diffidence in one's own strength, greatly contributes to the gain or loss of the battle. Man relying on his superiority in reasoning, speaks boldly; and woman, thinking herself inferior in argument, hears with deference and timidity. Who can deny but that here is a great presage that he will compass his ends, and she fall the victim?

Let women therefore be intimately convinced, cherish a strong persuasion that they are not inferior in sagacity to men, then will they confidently encounter their sophisms, and confound their seducers, however artful in disguising their injurious fallacies with the pigments of argumentation. If women be brought to a persuasion
that

that man, in respect to her, is an oracle, she will listen to the basest proposal, and acquiesce in the most notorious falsity, as a truth which she is not to question. It is well known to what shocking infamies those heretics called Molinists have inveigled many women, who, before, were not only irreproachable in their lives, but of shining characters; and whence arose this seduction, but from entertaining strange notions of man's superior intellects, and an extreme mistrust of their own understanding, when those poisonous doctrines were urged to them?

Another very interesting consideration is, that any woman yields the more easily to the man whom she fancies to be greatly her superior. A
man

man finds little reluctancy to serve another of higher birth, but where that circumstance is equal, servitude goes solely against the grain. It is the very same in our case. If a woman is so far mistaken as to think man of a much more noble sex, and that as for herself, she is but an imperfect animal, a kind of inferior being, she will think it no shame to submit to him, and the flattery of compliments and promise of obsequiousness working on her own debasing notion, she may be led to account that honour which is the very worst of infamies. Therefore, according to the energetic St. Leo, *Woman, entertain a due sense of thy dignity. Know that our sex is not in any respect preferable to thine; and therefore to allow man the dominion over thy*

thy body, except when authorised by the sacredness of marriage, is servile, infamous, and sinful.

I have not yet displayed all the moral benefit, which would accrue from men and women being cured of their mistake, with regard to the disparity of the sexes. It is my real belief, that this mistake is of infinite prejudice to the marriage bed. Here some may imagine, I am running into a strange paradox, yet, it is an evident truth, as a little attention will shew.

When some months are elapsed after two hearts were united in the bands of marriage, the woman loses that high value, which was before placed on her as a new piece of furniture

niture. The husband passes from fondness to coldness, and coldness often degenerates into a settled and declared contempt. The husband once come to this culpable extremity, begins to play the master, and insult his spouse, building on the imagined superiority of his sex. Having imbibed those common sayings; *that the most knowing woman, knows as much as a raw school boy; that their scull is as empty as a bladder full of soap-suds,* and the like elegant apothegms, every thing his poor wife says or does, he sneers at. If she argues, she raves, every word is an absurdity, and every action a blunder. The allurements of beauty, if she has any beauty, is now overlooked. Froition has thrown a shade over its brilliancy, and being at
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the husband's command, it is undervalued. All the husband thinks on, now is, that woman is a defectuous creature; and, when out of humour, the best word he can afford his wife, though ever so neat and cleanly, is, *that she is a foul vessel.*

Whilst the unhappy wife labours under this tyranny, a gallant begins to ogle her; a smiling countenance must naturally please one wearied out of her life with frowns, contemptuous looks, and imperious gestures. This suffices to bring about a conversation, in which, to be sure, every thing is calculated to please her. Before, it was nothing but taunts, threats, and insults; whereas, every word of the gallant, is fraught with complaisance,

complaisance, praise, and adoration. Before, she was not treated even like a woman; now, she sees herself exalted to a deity; before, she was blantly told that she was a fool; now, she hears herself extolled for incomparable wit and sense; to the husband, she was an object of vain ridicule and disgust; the gallant is enraptured with her matchless beauties and accomplishments; the husband governs her like an imperious tyrant; the gallant approaches her with the awe of a submissive slave. And though the enamorado, if a husband, may act the same part as the other within his own walls, the wretched wife, unacquainted with this dissimulation, thinks there is as much difference between them, as between an angel and a brute. In the

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husband, she sees a heart bristled with thorns, and in the gallant, a heart crowned with flowers. On one side, she sees a chain of iron, on the other, a bracelet of gold; here slavery, there despotism; with one a dungeon, the other a throne.

In such a situation, how shall the most discrete, the most resolute woman act? How resist two impulses, directed to one and the same end, one impelling her, the other gently drawing her? Without the powerful support of heaven, fall she must; and if she falls, who can deny, but that it was by the hand of her own husband. Had he not treated her with contempt, all the blandishments of the gallant, would not have prevailed against her.

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The rigour of the one, enforced the complaisance of the other. Such are the evils which frequently spring from that mean opinion of the other sex, which married men so often harbour and delight in exemplifying. Would these but throw aside such false maxims, their wives would spurn at every temptation to infidelity. God has enjoined affection to them, and that contempt and affection towards the same object can ever dwell in one heart, is utterly irreconcilable, a contradiction; and thus to treat a wife with contempt, is a breach of the divine command, than which, words cannot express any thing more horrible.

F I N I S.

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